

UNIVERSITY LIBERALS AND THE  
CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY, 1860-1886

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'Let's drink about, and talk  
a little of the state of the  
nation, or some such discourse  
that we all understand.'

Squire Western, in  
Tom Jones



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Woburn Sands, May 8, 1972

### Summary of Thesis

The process by which the ablest graduates of Oxford and Cambridge came to commit themselves to political liberalism in the 1860s was the result of ideological and institutional changes at the old universities. Academic liberalism was not simply an accommodation with a prevailing trend in external politics but implied a dedication to parliamentary democracy as a means both of maintaining in a changing society the values conserved by university education, and of reconciling hostile groups within that society through a common participation in the life of 'national' institutions - of which the universities provided an example. This commitment had been foreshadowed by the grandfathers of the academic liberals when social dislocation threatened Britain in the wake of the French Revolution. They interpreted the need for social reconciliation in the explicitly religious terms of the evangelical revival but they also bequeathed a tendency to identify individual moral judgements with social ethics. This became, in the later generation, a questioning of received authority and a buttress of individualistic liberalism.

Such impulses were stronger than the scriptural formulae of evangelicalism; after the crisis of the early years of the nineteenth century had eased, more intellectually satisfy-

ing ways of fulfilling them were sought. The Oxford Movement, rejecting evangelical theology, institutionalised its critical spirit in the university, but its collapse indicated that the desire to instruct and direct had to be articulated in terms of a philosophy which had contemporary relevance. Christian Socialism offered, in the vacuum caused by the Movement's collapse, one alternative; but its theological obscurity and political pessimism disqualified it at a time when liberal legislative programmes and 'scientific' analyses of society seemed to be verified by events. Liberal utilitarianism, as interpreted by John Stuart Mill, thus became in the 1850s and 1860s the dominant ideology among the younger fellows and 'reading men' of both universities.

Through the university institutions which had already been reformed, and the informal organisations of the abler undergraduates, the spread of liberal ideas was encouraged, but the slow pace of university reform, and the increasing opposition of the clerical party, deprived the younger dons of a secure future at the universities. Many were forced to use their fellowships as stepping stones to professional and journalistic life in London; there they maintained and extended the relationships made at Oxford and Cambridge, and developed contacts with liberal politicians and publicists.

Frustrated by the failure to gain a settlement favourable to liberal ideas at the universities, irritated by mounting attacks from the clerical party and concerned at the

growing alienation of the universities from commercial and industrial society, the younger academics agitated throughout the 1860s for the repeal of the religious tests which confined fellowships and teaching posts at both universities to members of the Church of England. This campaign led to closer relations with the parliamentary leadership and institutions of nonconformity, and with political radicals. The alliance was consolidated by the academics' absorption in foreign liberal movements. Italian liberal nationalism exemplified their 'national' ideal, and during the early 1860s their enthusiasm for the Federal cause in the American Civil War - which, despite its evangelical 'abolitionist' pedigree, separated the academics from their own class - increased their identification with radicalism and with the advocacy of domestic political reform.

Political commitment, however, still had to conform to the life-style of the academic group, and the academics were fortunate that the conservative challenge to the reform bill in 1866 was one they were peculiarly well fitted to answer. The reform essays of 1867 were their response to Robert Lowe's attack on any proposals to reduce the franchise. They were, in the absence of any strong functional link with reform forces in parliament and in the country, virtually the only way the academics could intervene. As far as their own social class was concerned, they were proof that there existed, within the 'educated classes' a strong body which favoured reform and believed that it, and the institutions it represen-

ted, could cope with its consequences; but there is little evidence that the essayists had any effect on the course of the reform agitation and its unexpected outcome.

The analysis of politics contained in the reform essays was framed by the academics' preoccupations during the 1860s. They were alert to the possible contribution of the universities as seminaries for political leaders, but they also saw them as analogues of traditional institutions in a changing state. This made them anxious both to justify the existence of such 'national' institutions, and sensitive to their effect on politics. Conscious of the retarding effect of institutional inertia on political change - in a way that more orthodox utilitarian liberals like Mill were not - they considered that the failure to adjust institutions to social realities could thwart the realisation of a classless 'national' community, and intensify class divisions and the false social analyses which arose from them. Such a 'national' settlement was an essential preliminary to the process of instructing an 'incorporated' working class through parliamentary participation to obey the 'laws' of social progress. Such 'laws' the academics equated with market economics and the social reforms they advocated compassed measures which enhanced their 'scientific' operation - notably the reform of land law, the codifying and simplifying of common law, and the improvement of education.

After the reform act the academics intervened frequently in politics, fighting elections, attempting to influence Liberal party policy and to extend political education. Although their efforts were recognised as distinctive, on the whole they failed. The internal cohesion of the group was weakened as reforms in the universities made for greater professional security and less contact with London political life on the part of the resident dons. At the same time the political settlement removed the pressures which held the group and its political allies together, replaced them with a different set of issues which proved divisive, and brought new radical forces, with unfamiliar aims, into the Liberal party. Failure in national politics exposed other inadequacies: the weakest link in the academics' analysis had been the process of uniting university reform with political reform through concrete plans for the democratisation and reorganisation of higher education. Some of them attempted to do this during the 1870s, but they were a minority of the group and their achievements, marginal at best, were foredoomed to failure when confronted with a conservatising university structure and, in national politics, growing divisions between the working and middle classes caused by economic depression. Insofar as the academic group remained cohesive, it preserved the political formulae it had applied to the 1860s, at a time when a fresh analysis was imperative.



This became apparent in 1886 when academic Liberals quitted the party in great numbers over the issue of Irish Home Rule. This was not, as has been argued, evidence of a general disillusion with democracy, but a specific divergence on Irish policy, where the 'scientific' liberalism of the academics failed to appreciate the preoccupation of the Gladstonian Liberal party with catering for client groups - labour, nonconformity, the Irish - the logical ends of whose demands inevitably conflicted with their crystal doctrines. The secession weakened further the academic liberals - Gladstonian and Unionist alike - who remained in national politics, while, as the imperial and tariff policies of the Salisbury and Balfour ministries demonstrated, it did little to moderate the anti-liberal elements in the Conservative party. Alienated both from Conservatism and from the social policies of the Liberals after 1906, the few surviving academics welcomed the First World War as a rekindling of the 'national' spirit they had recognised in Italy and America during the 1860s, only to recoil at the collectivist and social revolutionary implications of modern total conflict. The last survivors died during the 1920s, melancholy spectators of an alien world.

# UNIVERSITY LIBERALS AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY

1860 - 1886

## INTRODUCTION

### I

In the spring of 1867, at the height of the parliamentary struggle over the passage of the second Reform bill, a group of professional men, mainly young and for the most part connected with the two old universities, published two books entitled respectively Essays on Reform and Questions for a Reformed Parliament. The tone of both was not only favourable to the extension of the franchise but sympathetic to an ideal of democratic government which, until then, had been deprecated as revolutionary by the educated classes in Britain. For this reason the books had a mixed reception, but on one thing all their reviewers were agreed: Oxford and Cambridge seemed to have emerged as seminaries for radical theorists.

The phenomenon of the radical don was, in fact, as much remarked on as the political argument of the essays themselves. Robert Lowe, who had hitherto made the political running with his denunciations of any lowering of the franchise as a surrender to 'the evils of unbridled democracy',<sup>1</sup> found

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1. Robert Lowe (unsigned article): Review of Essays on Reform and Questions for a Reformed Parliament in The Quarterly Review, vol.cxxiii, No.245 (July 1867), p.245.

cause for concern in the apparent failure of the universities to impart a conservative cast of mind to their alumni,<sup>1</sup> and in this he typified the attitudes of those of similar political persuasion,<sup>2</sup> but enthusiasts for reform welcomed this accession to their ranks.<sup>3</sup> And far from regarding any connection between reform and education with suspicion, they argued that the essays represented a significant shift of opinion within the universities, which promised an effective alliance in future between intellect and Demos.<sup>4</sup> The editor of the radical Fortnightly Review, John Morley, an Oxford contemporary of several of the contributors, wrote<sup>5</sup>

The extreme advanced party is likely for the future to have on its side the most highly cultivated intellect in the nation, and the contest will lie between brains and numbers on one side, and wealth, rank, vested interest, possession in short, on the other.

and his review pointed out that the essayists and the class they represented were not merely lending an intellectual gloss to other men's policies, but had evolved distinctive political perceptions of their own. More, they could be counted on to participate in the political process themselves and make their ideals into a reality.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid., p.245.

2. See also the reviews of the two volumes in The Athenaeum, March 23 and May 11, 1867; The Contemporary Review, Vol. V. (June, 1867).

3. See the reviews in Macmillan's Magazine, Vol. XV. (April, 1867), written but not signed by Leslie Stephen; The Saturday Review, Vol. XXIII (April 6, 1867) also unsigned, by J.R.Green; The British Quarterly Review, Vol. XLVI, (July, 1867).

4. J.R.Green, loc. cit., p.438.

5. The Fortnightly Review, New Series, vol.ii (April 1 1867) p.492.

6. Ibid., p.496.

The group of academics out of which the essays came certainly produced, by the standards of late Victorian Britain, a significant number of distinguished public men. Among the contributors to the essays themselves can be numbered A.V. Dicey, the jurist, Sir Leslie Stephen, biographer and literary critic, Goldwin Smith, historian, Viscount Bryce, politician and ambassador, Sir George Young and Sir Godfrey Lushington, Civil Service heads respectively of the Charity Commission and the Home Office, Frederic Harrison, journalist, historian and trade union reformer, and Thorold Rogers, economic historian. They were, in their turn, only a part of a larger group of liberal academics which included Henry Sidgwick, philosopher, economist and political scientist, Henry Fawcett and Lord Courtney, economists and politicians, Oscar Browning, historian and educational reformer, James Stuart, pioneer of university extension and politician, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, politician and historian - all these from Cambridge - and, from Oxford, T.H. Green and Edward Caird, philosophers, Lords Bowen and Davey, judges, Sir Thomas Holland, jurist, Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff, politician and governor of Madras, Lyulph Stanley, Lord Sheffield, educational reformer, J.R. Green and E.A. Freeman, historians, and Sir Courtenay Ilbert, Clerk to the House of Commons.

Distinguished enough, true, but not, it can be argued, a collection of names which are household words today. Nor, politically at any rate, can they be said to have reached the front rank in their own day. Morley had said in 1867

that the writers of the essays 'must be the influential and governing generation of thirty years hence'<sup>1</sup> but when the mid-nineties came, were they? A glance at the destination Morley presumably had in mind, the cabinet of a Liberal government, would show that, before the Liberals went out of power in 1895, he, alone of these who 'had the future',<sup>2</sup> occupied a senior position of influence. Two others, Bryce and Trevelyan, had relatively junior posts, the premiership lay in the hands of the Earl of Rosebery, a man sent down from Christ Church for owning a racehorse,<sup>3</sup> His successor, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, was an undistinguished and unenthusiastic graduate of Trinity, Cambridge,<sup>4</sup> and the coming men in the party were either from a much younger generation, or not from the universities at all.

Nevertheless, James Bryce, at the summit of his career as Ambassador to the United States, was able to look back on the lives of his contemporaries and say<sup>5</sup>

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1. Morley, op. cit., p.496.

2. Ibid.

3. Robert Rhodes James, Rosebery, (1963), p.52.

4. J.A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1923), vol.i, pp.19-20. One could argue that Sir William Harcourt, as Whewell Professor of International Law at Cambridge, 1869-1887, could be classed as an academic; but I would submit that his connection with the university was nominal in the extreme. The D.N.B. notes of his tenure: 'Throughout that period he delivered lectures at increasingly irregular intervals and occupied rooms in Trinity College which he decorated with elaborate heraldic ornaments'. Dictionary of National Biography, II Supp. Vol. II., p.200.

5. James Bryce, extract from speech to students of McGill University, Toronto, 1913, quoted in obituary in The Scotsman, February 23, 1922.

We in England from long tradition look on the political life as the finest career to which a man of activity and ambition could devote himself, and those of us who thought we saw an opening to it were always eager to enter. Looking back some forty years, I cannot but think of those men who came from the English Universities into public life and infused into it the spirit of the high standards they owned. These men have been an inspiration to the nation's life.

While in terms of the central control of parties and governments this claim is absurd, in a broader sense it is quite valid. As my brief survey of the nature of the careers of the academic liberal group shows, they did penetrate deep into areas of public life which were influential - the civil service, education, journalism and literature. Moreover, they carried their ideology with them. To the end of their lives they related their political and intellectual environment to the situation of the 1860s, rarely, be it said, with any conviction that matters had improved much since. Visiting Oxford in 1888, Henry Sidgwick wrote:<sup>1</sup>

I am inclined to think there is no real life now - no central predominant pulsation of life - such as there was in "the Consulship of Plancus" (1860-65).

And in 1900 Sir George Otto Trevelyan wrote to Bryce, in similar vein, about his son George Macauley Trevelyan:<sup>2</sup>

We are much pleased by the impression George made on you. I fear you are right about the want of virile interest among the younger men as compared with the generation of the Liberal revival of the Sixties. What an epoch it was, and how natural it all seemed at the time!

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1. Sidgwick MSS.: Diary-letter to John Addington Symonds, May 20, 1888.

2. Bryce MSS.: Trevelyan - Bryce, December 6, 1900.

So far I have attempted to indicate that the political commitment of the 1860s was followed by professional success and achievement, but that, politically, ultimate ambitions and ideals were not realised and that a certain disillusionment followed. However, another facet of the academic liberal achievement was given prominence by George Macauley Trevelyan himself, when he wrote in his memoir of his father:<sup>1</sup>

My father belonged to the younger generation of Oxford and Cambridge men who had little to do with the Oxford Movement except to react against it. They were leagued to open the Universities to all, irrespective of religion... The Tests Act of 1871, which threw open Oxford and Cambridge to the nation irrespective of creed, was the outcome of a long agitation, conducted both inside and outside the two Universities... Never before or since were the younger dons of the two elder Universities drawn so closely together as when they had a common task to perform and a common battle to fight.

This implies that institutional reform paralleled involvement in national politics. Trevelyan's conclusions are valid enough: the university liberals played, in the campaign to open the universities to the nation, a much more specific and critical role than they fulfilled in external politics. There is ample evidence also that their thinking on reform extended to proposals to make the universities cater for the educational needs of the democratic state they had argued for in the political debate, and that the political situation played an import-

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1. G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan (1932), p.70.



ant role in securing university reform. Goldwin Smith, the most prominent of the Oxford liberals, wrote to James Bryce in 1869<sup>1</sup>

I have always thought that the hope of the Oxford Liberals lay not in any contest in Oxford itself - a narrow arena, where the enemy has long been, and still is entrenched in overwhelming strength, but in victory on an ampler field. Liberalise the national legislature and the national legislature will liberalise Oxford at one stroke without waste of lives and end this chronic bitterness.

There is evidence too, that while successful in the immediate campaign, the university liberals lost the longer term campaign for rational and liberal reforms in the government and curricula of the universities.

## II

What I have tried to do up to now is to suggest the main areas of concern in the study of the universities and politics in the mid and late nineteenth century in the way in which they are most familiar to most students of the period. These have been transmitted to the general histories and textbooks by a variety of types of historical writing. Close to the period itself were numerous biographical and autobiographical works, including the monumental Dictionary of National Biography, which, naturally enough in view of Leslie Stephen's position as first editor, did the academics remarkably well. The merit of this mass of material is the

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1. Bryce MSS.: Goldwin Smith - James Bryce, July 7, 1869.



wealth of documents provided, and also its cross-discipline nature, something historical writing has only recently come to cater for; its drawbacks are the discretion enforced on the biographer and the understandable tendency to overvalue the roles of individuals.

Then, fairly steadily from the turn of the century, there have been works on the history of university reform itself. Beginning with Lewis Campbell's fine The Nationalisation of the Old English Universities (1901) and A.I. Tillyard's less satisfactory A History of University Reform (1913) these have included Denys Winstanley's four volumes on Cambridge<sup>1</sup> and, most recently, the work of W.R. Ward on Oxford<sup>2</sup> and John Roach<sup>3</sup> and Sheldon Rothblatt<sup>4</sup> on Cambridge. While the chief concern has still been the history of the institution itself, the nature of historical research into university reform has developed from the rather self-congratulatory liberalism of the biographies and early accounts like Campbell's into a more analytical approach which emphasises the 'political roles' of participants and institutions.

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1. The University of Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century (1922), Unreformed Cambridge (1935), Early Victorian Cambridge (1940), and Later Victorian Cambridge (1947).
  2. Georgian Oxford (1958) and Victorian Oxford (1965).
  3. 'The University of Cambridge' in The Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire, Vol.3 (1959), pp.150-311.
  4. The Revolution of the Dons (1968).

Similarly, until recently, studies of the role of academics in external politics tended to be subsumed into one of two categories, political history and biography, in which the treatment tended either to be straightforwardly biographical or written in terms of specific issues, or political theory, in which the academic approach tended to be chopped into the accepted categories of the discipline: attitudes to 'natural rights', 'sovereignty', and so forth. This was typified in the classic treatments of political theory in the nineteenth century - those of Ernest Barker<sup>1</sup> and Crane Brinton,<sup>2</sup> for example.

Here too, recent advances in the writing of political history - in the period this thesis deals with chiefly that of Professors Hanham<sup>3</sup> and Vincent<sup>4</sup> - have laid stress on the role of politics as providing an identity for groups in society, a function distinct from the one traditionally attributed to them by liberal and Marxist historians alike,

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1. Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day (1915). See his chapter headings on T.H. Green: 'The idealist school - T.H. Green - origins of idealist school - Kant and Hegel - Hegel's *étatisme* - T.H. Green and his times - conception of liberty - rights and their recognition - sovereignty and its basis - reality of the general will - natural rights and resistance - the state and other societies - the ethics of war - canon of state interference - the theory of punishment - attitude to social reform - education and temperance - theory of property - property in land - standard "worth of persons"'.<sup>1</sup>
  2. Political Thought in Britain in the Nineteenth Century (1933).
  3. Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone (1959).
  4. The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868 (1966).

that of securing legislative change in the interests of identifiable groups. And, in the study of political theory, the belated discovery by British political scientists of the application of sociological techniques to the study of political organisations by Max Weber, Robert Michels and Emile Durkheim and their continental contemporaries, has caused both a change in the methods employed in the study of political theory, and a critical revaluation of the political thinkers of the late nineteenth century themselves. This last has tended, understandably, to dislodge some from the textbooks, and to enhance the position of others; in the main it has possibly been more destructive than anything else, as the search for British political thinkers who centred their inquiries on the nature of society rather than on the responsibilities and freedoms of the individual leads most directly to the Scottish Enlightenment and the social speculations of Robertson, Millar, Ferguson and Stewart,<sup>1</sup> and to the groups who, influenced by German idealist historiography, reacted against the rationalism of their inquiry.<sup>2</sup>

This revaluation implies a concentration on the environment in which intellectuals theorised about politics; on the relation between their immediate situation and their political perceptions; on the audience which they addressed, its perceptions, anxieties and vocabulary; on the intellectual traditions on which they drew. This in its turn draws the link between political

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1. Gladys Bryson, Man and Society (1945).

2. Duncan Forbes, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History (1952).

theory, however imperfect, and political practice - or at least environment - closer. A theorist's importance can then be given a value, not in some timeless category of philosophic merit, but in terms of the political problems of the society of his own day, or at least of the politically-involved group within it, and of his ability to rationalise these and aid in their resolution.

Such an approach is particularly valuable in studying what could be called the evolution of the modern British intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century. The word only entered the English language about the time of the first world war, significantly a borrowing from the Russian, indicating, according to the Oxford English Dictionary,<sup>1</sup>

The class of society to which culture, superior intelligence, and advanced political views are attributed.

There can be no quarrel, I think, with applying that definition to the group of liberals centring round the universities in the 1860s, but I would doubt whether it could be considered applicable to any previous period. It is part of my concern to argue that during this period a link between educational institutions and politics was forged, strong enough to produce an independent class, secured by its institutional control, which had the liberty and the security to speculate politically. The quality of

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1. Op. cit.

such speculation may not sustain a classical qualitative analysis, but I would argue that it was essential to the nascent intelligentsia's identification of itself as a distinct group. The existence of such a group, with its educational and political influence, its strengths and weaknesses, has since been as important a political fact in Britain as any of the abstractions of the classical political scientist.

The most stimulating work on this phenomenon has been done within the relatively orthodox framework of the biographical approach. Noel Annan's Leslie Stephen: His Life and Thought in Relation to his Time (1951) took Stephen's achievement on its own terms and showed how the main concerns of his life - the promotion of free inquiry, the attempt to create a science of ethics, to apply objective criteria to literary criticism - arose from particular aspects of his intellectual situation, environment and relationships. From this main line of study, Annan continually threw out further branches of inquiry, which led one to the conclusion that Stephen typified his generation. I have found that my own work, looking at the academics as a group - their function and their achievement - has substantially borne out most of Annan's suppositions and informed guesses. However, I think I have done something more than merely footnote Annan, so should like to explain my own approach.

## III

Conclusions first: the central concern of my thesis has been the nature and consciousness of the liberals themselves. I believe that in the years 1855 - 1870 the younger men at the universities were moulded into a conscious group, which effectively contained them until their deaths up to sixty years later. This fact of group identity is the most important thing to grasp: the pressures which moulded it were individually less important than this consciousness, as were the perceptions it left them with. These pressures included family background, religious experience, college relationships, political speculation and sympathy: they formed, with the intellectual and political environment of the period, a die in which the academics were cast. Though, I feel, 'die' is scarcely the metaphor for a group intent on, and partially successful in, promoting change. The problem, however, was that the formula of powerful group-consciousness plus will to reform plus atmosphere conducive to reform was itself unstable: partial reforms, integration into other professional activities, the demoralisation and, in 1874, the defeat of a Liberal government of which so much had been expected, contributed to weaken its cohesion just at the time when, to sustain the aims promulgated in the 1860s, it had to evolve a considered programme for the future role of the universities and university intellectuals in a democratic society. Weakness meant that the programme was not completed, and such elements of it as were attempted were not sustained. In its turn this meant that the universities drifted away from political life, and the

liberalism of those who made their career within them became an intellectual construct rather than a practical creed. The links between the 'residents' and their contemporaries continued, but in these changed circumstances they became an impediment to the political involvement of the latter, for whom a retrospective consciousness of generation tended to be more important than any understanding of the realities of politics. The critical demonstration of this weakness came in 1886, when the university residents rejected, on 'liberal' grounds which were uniquely applicable to their own situation, Gladstone's Home Rule policy, and thus cut themselves off from the Liberal party and those of their contemporaries closest to practical politics. Although, on similar intellectual arguments, they subsequently reconciled themselves, the political situation had by then changed, a new generation had moved to the fore, and their arguments were no longer applicable. The result, for the dwindling body of survivors, was a pessimistic alienation from the course of politics.

It is only possible to understand the political consciousness of this group by studying the complex manner in which the consciousness of being a distinctive group evolved. To attribute this to a simple social causality - the penetration of the universities by the offspring of the owners of the new industrial wealth - is, as I show in Appendix 1, an untenable proposition. The investigations of the social background of a representative sample of the academic liberals that I have carried out indicate that they came from a group which, for at least a generation, had had



access to the universities and, by and large, belonged to the clerical-landed society for which they traditionally catered. What I found myself to be dealing with was essentially a change of opinion within part of a given social class, partly the effect of ideological change, partly of inherited social perceptions, partly due to the effect of the immediate educational environment. This indicated that I should start by taking on trust the consciousness of the academics that they constituted a distinct group, and in that context explore the circumstances which led to its formation.

The group consciousness is apparent enough: it is patent in the nature and content of the correspondence of the individual academics, and strengthened by subsequent memoirs and biographies. Making allowance for the fact that many academics would communicate more by word of mouth than by letter, at least in their university days, only emphasises its strength.

So, from the standpoint of the assumed group, I intend to examine first the ideological, and then the institutional pressures which moulded its consciousness. I will then go on to study the circumstances, both in university affairs and foreign politics, which impelled the academics into political activity in the 1860s, and the nature of this activity itself. This brings me to consider their conception of politics and of their role in them. Finally I want to examine the attempt to sustain a political role for the university men and its failure.



CHAPTER 1The Liberal Intellect at the English Universities

Since that time (November 1834) Phaeton has got into the chariot of the sun; we, alas! can only look on and watch him down the steep of heaven... Such was the commencement of the assault of Liberalism upon the old orthodoxy of Oxford and England...

John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (1864), Fontana edition, p.139.

## I

In his book The Revolution of the Dons, Mr. Sheldon Rothblatt postulates the existence of two schools of historians concerned with the reform of higher education in the nineteenth century: the 'whigs' and the 'class-conflict' interpreters. The whigs, in Mr. Rothblatt's words,<sup>1</sup>

paraphrase or adopt the models and assumptions of nineteenth century constitutional, political and administrative history; improvement or growth and change remain their general themes... The whig interpretation proceeds on the assumption that university history may be fruitfully discussed in political terms.

Within this scheme they explain the actual course of reform by examining the structure of academic politics, the role of the don as politician, and the relationship of the universities with the central government. The class-conflict

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1. Sheldon Rothblatt, The Revolution of the Dons (1968), p.19.

school, on the other hand,<sup>1</sup> 'sees university and institutional change as primarily a reflection of the struggle for power and influence among competing classes.' Academic manoeuvring is here definitely subordinate to the inexorable pressure of the ascendant middle class and reform - the word instantly acquires a new ambiguity - is carried out in its interest. The tendency of both approaches has been 'to disregard the lofty and self-effacing pronouncements of the Victorians'<sup>2</sup> and in this way a third contribution has been squeezed out of the debate. The initial purpose of this chapter will be to push it back.

This contribution is of course the massive bequest of the literature of Victorian academic life, for the most part in biographical or autobiographical form, but including more systematic works and, in Lewis Campbell's The Nationalization of the Old English Universities, a historical account of much merit. While it is possible for the whig to dismiss as simplistic the Victorian academic liberal's view of academic politics as a contest between light and darkness, or for the 'class-conflict' interpreter to cite, say, Campbell's neglect of the social effects of the academic reforms themselves, the original students of the reform movement seem to me to have grasped a dimension to the movement which the schematic approaches of their successors have obscured: simply that it was closely

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1. *ibid.*, p.20.

2. *ibid.*, p.19.

associated with profound changes in social, political and philosophical thought. I have already quoted the hostile comment of Cardinal Newman. Let us listen to Mountstuart Grant Duff, M.P., an Oxford liberal, speaking in 1864 in favour of the abolition of the tests:<sup>1</sup>

In the years between 1827 and 1833 it became sufficiently evident that the movement which had rolled all over Europe... had reached at last even the University of Oxford, and there seemed not a little chance that that great corporation might awake from the sleep in which it had long been held, and make at last some steps forward...

(and, after the aberration of the Movement...)

Since February, 1848, the history of opinion in Oxford is merely a branch of the general history of religious opinion in Protestant Europe. It has lost altogether the curiously local and exceptional character which it had during the so-called Oxford movement...

The role of speculation, obviously important to contemporary commentators, has not found a prominent place in modern critiques, just as these commentators themselves undervalued or neglected political manoeuvre and class interest. However, its rehabilitation is not a matter of extracting a quid pro quo: an understanding of the evolution of the thought of the liberals as the universities is essential if we are to comprehend the precise function they performed in the tests campaign, and equally necessary if we are to appreciate the assumptions which underlay their political thought.

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1. M.E. Grant Duff, M.P., Speech of 16 March 1864, on the Tests Abolition Bill. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxiv, cols.117-9

A revaluation of the Victorian contribution to literature on the reform movement does not imply a desire on my part to displace either of the more modern schools. However, I feel that its effect will be to enhance the authority of an approach ultimately based on a class analysis. The limitations of the whig school become patently demonstrable when, during the 1860s, the leading protagonists of liberal reform are only partly able to be analysed in terms of their university connections, being resident in London and active in the political life of the capital, and exhibit a thorough-going commitment to the programme of middle-class radicalism which cannot simply be explained in terms of tactical calculation.

Unfortunately Professor Brian Simon, whose Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870 (1960) must rank as the most important work of the class-conflict or Marxist school, scarcely alludes to what ought to be a critical argument in his thesis - the degree to which the academic liberals identified themselves with the whole of the middle class critique of society, one aspect of which was the opening of the universities. In Simon's book the universities and their condition are seen almost exclusively through the eyes of external critics, yet the fact must be faced that throughout the reform campaign the leading roles were played by university men, staffing and supplying evidence to the commissions, and organising and directing the parliamentary and public campaigns of the 1860s to secure repeal of the tests. In such circumstances the political opinions of the academic liberals become a decisive factor.

Here, it must be confessed, is where the liberal interpretation of men like Lewis Campbell was at its weakest: it tended to conceive of liberalism, or 'the spirit of free enquiry' as a constant, growing in strength but unchanging in character, gradually eroding the conservatism of the old institutions. It conquered by convincing the individual by rational argument of its truth, and then that individual put his rationale to work on practical problems. It did not admit that the liberal movement could be deeply and permanently influenced by factors which did not, ultimately, admit of a rational explanation - the atmosphere of the home, the tastes, sensibilities and relationships induced by collegiate life, the straightforward aesthetic appeal of Oxford and Cambridge. Such things were taken for granted, when in fact they were what distinguished the cast of mind of liberal university men from their external allies. Thus the liberal approach tended to underplay the institutional contribution to the evolution of the academic mind: certain historical developments which were influential in moulding it, but found no place in the liberal catalogue, like the evangelical revival and the Oxford movement, were categorised either as primitive survivals or as conservative aberrations. These, I would submit, gave the liberal movement at the universities its distinctively political cast - political not in the whig sense, but in the sense of being absorbed in the relationships of society and the intellectual life.

So a study of the evolution of liberal thought at the universities is an essential preliminary to an examination of the political theory and practice of the academics. Such a study, however, involves attempting to understand the complex interactions of inherited convictions, advances in philosophical and political theory, social change and institutional traditions. In this chapter I intend to examine the interactions of these factors which were to be most significant in influencing the thought of the generation of university men who came to maturity between 1850 and 1865, starting with the response of their class to social change during the period of continental revolution and war, and the influence of this reaction on them. Then I want to follow the fortunes of the resulting evangelical movement in the universities during a period of important domestic political change, and observe how the character of both was altered by the resulting dialectic. Only, I think, by a careful study of these two preliminary episodes can we understand the nature of the later liberal domination of university thought - why it came about and what its distinctive qualities were.

## II

In his L.T. Hobhouse Lecture, The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought, Noel Annan has remarked on the tradition of individualism in the approach of English thinkers to social philosophy, an approach which sees a necessary identity of individual and social morality. He contrasts this with the sociology of Weber, Durkheim and

Pareto, to whom society was not susceptible of interpretation in terms of the conduct of the individual, but as a 'nexus of groups'. The centrality to social philosophy of the self-regarding individual attempting to live a 'moral' life was dropped, and to the continental sociologists the individual became<sup>1</sup>

...a bolt that might snap if the nut of society held it too tightly or loosely. Institutions could never be explained solely in terms of their utility; they could be understood only by discovering how they corresponded to the general needs of society.

Annan observes that while on the continent the positivist tradition was either in decline - for instance, in France, - or had made no significant impact on an entrenched idealist philosophy of history - as in Germany - in England it was actually reinforced by the formal debates between reason and dogma of the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>2</sup> As among the participants in these debates the academic liberals were conspicuous in the ranks of the followers of reason, the individualistic tradition ran deeply in them, so deep indeed that the emphasis on the moral conduct of the individual transcended the differences between empiricist and idealist schools. The source of this distinctive ingredient of the English political tradition, and of that tradition's divergence from the tendencies of European social and political thought, can be detected in the reactions of the various national communities

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1. Noel Annan, op.cit. (Delivered May 7, 1958, published 1959) p.9.

2. Ibid., p.11.



to the upheavals of the revolutionary period. These reactions were reflected in the intellectual atmosphere of the countries involved. Sharing a general revulsion from the Enlightenment's exaltation of pure reason, Germans, Frenchmen and English exhibited it in different ways. In Germany it took the form of the romantic and idealist nationalism disliked by Goethe,<sup>1</sup> in France it was associated with an absorption in the study of the structure and mechanics of society exemplified in Saint-Simonianism.<sup>2</sup> Having suffered neither invasion nor revolution, England was that much distanced from the traumas of the continent. But she felt a measure of their force and, moreover, came to realise that her own social structure was in process of rapid, if peaceful, change. England's response - or rather the response of her educated and propertied classes - was the evangelical movement, or what the agnostic Leslie Stephen was to call the 'religious reaction'.<sup>3</sup> 'Evangelical morality', writes Lord Annan, 'was the single most widespread influence in Victorian England';<sup>4</sup> although Leslie Stephen was later to opt in favour of the 'sound common sense'<sup>5</sup> of the eighteenth century, Annan comments perceptively:<sup>6</sup>

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1. See, for instance, J.L. Talmon, Romanticism and Revolution (1967), p.124.

2. Ibid., pp.58-68.

3. Leslie Stephen, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (1876), vol.ii, c.xii, section vi.

4. and 6. Noel Annan, Leslie Stephen (1951), p.110.

5. Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (1904), p.97.



The peremptory demand for sincerity, the delight in plain-speaking, the unvarying accent on conduct, and the conviction that he who has attained a Higher Truth must himself evangelise... proclaim him a child of the Evangelical tradition.

The tradition, inculcated by the atmosphere of the home, penetrated deep into the psyche not only of Stephen but of the vast majority of his friends and contemporaries. When we look for the source of the individualist ethic in nineteenth century English thought, we will find it here.

Essentially there were two dimensions to the evangelical imprint - the individual and the social. The subsequent careers of those raised in an evangelical household demonstrate amply the depth of the impression made by both. The importance of individuality stemmed directly from the necessity of the sinner experiencing the grace of God through the act of conversion - repenting of his sins and offering himself to the mercy of his Maker. The essence of the late eighteenth century revival, which was not noted for its theological subtlety, was that this 'new birth' was freely available to the truly penitent. The responsibility for the future of his soul rested with the individual, not with Calvin's omnipotent deity who could consign evil and good together to Hell. A doctrine of such vagueness would find it difficult to sustain itself in an age with the leisure and inclination for theological disputation, but the years which saw revolution in France and Europe ablaze with war produced, in the mind of the governing classes of England, an attitude which regarded the religious revival with no unfriendly eye. Faced with grim events abroad, and the potential menace at home of the growth of an industrial

society, the socially reconciling power of 'vital religion' took on, in their eyes, a new significance. Professor Victor Kiernan has noted that to them it had<sup>1</sup>

the great merit, in face of egalitarian ideas, of throwing into relief the equality of souls without disturbing the inequality of ranks. All men were not equally good, as Rousseau had made people think, but they were all equally bad.

Kiernan notes that during the 1790s the 'reasonable' interpretations of religion 'as the formulary of an established society'<sup>2</sup> were dropped in favour of the direct appeal of the Wesleyan preacher. A common religious language was a necessary social cement, and 'if high and low were to join in worship, it must be the worship of the poor.'<sup>3</sup>

Goldwin Smith, who, exceptionally among his contemporaries, had been brought up in a broad-church household - Dean Milman and Bishop Blomfield were family friends<sup>4</sup> - reached a similar conclusion in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of History at Oxford, when he contemplated the eighteenth century:<sup>5</sup>

The corruption was not universal, or the nation would never have lifted its head again. The people received the religion which the gentry and clergy had rejected; the people preserved the traditions of English morality and English duty; the people repaired, by their unflagging industry, the waste of profligate finance, and of reckless and mis-conducted wars.

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1. Victor Kiernan, 'Evangelicalism and the French Revolution' in Past and Present vol.i, (1952), pp.49-50.

2. Ibid., p.46.

3. Ibid., p.47.

4. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences (1911), p.4. Article on Goldwin Smith in D.N.B. supp.ii.

5. Goldwin Smith, Lectures in Modern History (1861), p.9. The Inaugural Lecture was delivered in 1859.

That Smith, at the start of a lecture which was to claim for the universities the role of preparing the leaders of the nation for their tasks, should have alluded to the democratic element in the evangelical revival is significant enough. The emphasis evangelicalism placed on the equality in God's sight of each human soul is directly comparable with the emphasis the liberals later placed on the civic and political equality of individuals within the nation.<sup>1</sup> Reconciliation of classes through common religious institutions had been replaced by co-operation between classes in political activity. The serious, almost reverent manner in which many of the university liberals adapted their manner of life to their political activity - T.H. Green's desire for 'the society of plain people',<sup>2</sup> his rough farmer's suit, his insistence on travelling third class - recalls Wesley on circuit, a secular Wesley the ideal of whose sermons was not the spiritual salvation of the individual but his fulfilment in co-operation with his fellows in a political commonwealth.

'Protestantism in one aspect,' commented Stephen in his biography of his brother, 'is simply rationalism still running about with the shell on its head.'<sup>3</sup> Clear away the impurities of superstition from the reaction of social change on the

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1. See, for instance, James Bryce, 'The Historical Aspect of Democracy' in Essays on Reform (1867), p.272.

2. See R.L. Nettleship, 'Memoir of T.H. Green', vol.iii of Works of T.H. Green (1888), p.xix. and James Bryce, 'T.H. Green' in Studies in Contemporary Biography (1903), p.87.

3. Leslie Stephen, Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen (1895), pp.309-10. Quoted in Annan *op.cit.*, p.128.

beliefs of the educated class at the end of the eighteenth century and you discover as your precipitate the acquisition of a well-developed and unusually active conscience, an estimable but by no means a transcendent utility. A.V. Dicey remarked of his mother, Anne Stephen, Leslie's aunt, that her evangelicalism<sup>1</sup>

was closely connected, if not almost blended, with many features of Quakerism, and was, as my experience goes, hardly tainted by... Calvinism.

that the Noel Annan too has remarked, correspondence between the evangelical conscience and the Quaker notion of the inner light was close,<sup>2</sup> and has quoted with effect Francis Newman's contention that the connection between the inner light and rationalist enquiry was closer still:<sup>3</sup>

I was an Evangelical, but, like plenty of Evangelicals beside, both now and then, was resolved to follow the Truth whithersoever it led me; and was always indignant when told 'you must believe this or that', or you will find it 'will lead you further.' 'If that time comes, I shall go further' was my uniform reply.

One aspect of the effect of the evangelical spirit on the individuality of the future academic liberals remains to be noticed. It is more a matter of style than of intellectual make-up - the element of rigour, of self-conscious detachment, of reserve, which seems to have pervaded their personalities. Thomas Hardy's comparison of Leslie Stephen to the Schreckhorn is telling:<sup>4</sup>

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1. Quoted in R.S. Rait, Memorials of A.V. Dicey (1925), p.13.
  2. Noel Annan 'The Intellectual Aristocracy' in Studies in English Social History (1955), pp.245-6.
  3. Quoted in Annan, Leslie Stephen, p.113.
  4. Ibid., p.108.

Aloof, as if a thing of mood and whim,  
 Now that its spare and desolate figure gleams  
 Upon my nearing vision, less it seems  
 A looming Alp-height than a guise of him.

This was not the only time that Hardy, associated with but not a member of the academic group, imaginatively captured qualities of its character its members seem rarely to have been *aware of*. The formal, undemonstrative, withdrawn nature of the academics was remarked neither by themselves nor by those among their biographers who were close contemporaries. Analysis of character was confined to the usual plaudits of their generosity and kindness. One significant exception, however, does come to mind - Sir Henry Cunningham's portrait of Charles Bowen. Cunningham, exceptionally among his circle, was an imaginative writer of some merit, and his remarks on Bowen's nature can be seen, by anyone who has read much of the personal correspondence of the academics, to have a general relevance to a study of their common character.<sup>1</sup>

There are minds which are dominated by an instinctive reserve. They have intellectual and moral recesses, the gloom of which they themselves hardly venture to explore, problems which they give up as insoluble, depths which no plummet may sound, obstinate questionings to which no answer is forthcoming, mysteries of their own consciousness before which they stand in mute bewilderment. The last thing which natures so constituted can endure is the prying eye and the officious tongue, which would destroy the privacy of existence, invade the recesses of thought and feeling, and make their inner life the theme of common talk. To invite the public to walk in, observe and criticise, seems to them a sort of desecration of holy places, which should be guarded in obscurity. If they have a strong emotion, their first impulse is to shroud it from notoriety. Some friendly ear may, in some especially confident moment, catch a hint of what lies beneath; but such flashes of outspokenness are few and far between. To the world at large the man remains inscrutable.

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1. Sir Henry Cunningham, Lord Bowen (1896), pp.6-7.

The correspondence with, say, the persistently high-minded tone of James Bryce, his patent scruple and benevolence, and his distance from what we conceive as the sensibility of ordinary human nature, all patent in Bryce's letters, is an obvious one. But surely it is the direct result of a tendency which invests the mind of the individual with such awesome responsibilities. When Protestantism shook the shell off its head the responsibilities increased, as the rational and self-regarding individual became the yardstick of utilitarian politics, and the pressure to dissociate from common sensibility increased. The carapace of detachment served the academics well in producing that strong, sharp intellect - what Leslie Stephen was wont to refer to as the 'masculine' mind - which ploughed its way through, in Stephen's own case, ethics, politics, economics and literary criticism. Against this, however, the systematised individualism of the academics alienated them from an appreciation of the motives which, in practice, governed the political behaviour of ordinary people. Graham Wallas exposed this gulf succinctly in Human Nature in Politics when, attacking the manner in which political science was taught at the universities, he cited James Bryce's preface to Ostrogorski's Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties as an example of it:<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Bryce refers to 'the democratic ideal of the intelligent independence of the individual voter, an ideal far removed from the actualities of any State.'

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1. Graham Wallas, Human Nature in Politics (1909) (Constable's 1929 edition), pp.126-7.



What does Mr. Bryce mean by 'ideal democracy'? If it means anything it means the best form of democracy which is consistent with the facts of human nature. But one feels...that Mr. Bryce means by these words the kind of democracy which might be possible if human nature were as he himself would like it to be, and as he was taught at Oxford to think that it was.

Though the cause surely lies less with the university, whose facilities for the teaching of political science were scarcely effective enough to leave such an impression, than with the conception of individual responsibility inculcated in the life of the home, which was common to Bryce's generation at Oxford.

I have already alluded to the role of the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as an instrument of social control. I want to conclude my examination of the revival's implications for the future academic liberals by studying their attitude to this aspect of its impact, as here again can be seen a correspondence between their mature conception of the function of politics and their fathers' and grandfathers' conception of the function of religion. Looking back on the evangelical revival from the agnostic 1870s, Leslie Stephen and John Morley both commended the robust if naive reinforcement it gave to civilised society. Stephen wrote:<sup>1</sup>

Throughout England sturdy sensible men of the narrowest possible intellectual horizon, but the most vivid conviction of the value of certain teachings, were stirring the masses by addresses suited to indolent imaginations. What, they seem to have tacitly enquired, is the argument which will induce an ignorant miner or a small tradesman in a country town to give up drinking and cock-fighting? The obvious answer was: Tell him that he is going straight to hell-fire to be tortured for all eternity...

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1. Leslie Stephen, English Thought in the Eighteenth Century vol.ii, p.428.

Morley's encomium was even more dramatic;<sup>1</sup>

Although the theology of a town like Blackburn is of a narrow, unhistoric and rancorous kind, yet one must give even this dull and cramped Evangelicalism its due, and admit that the churches and chapels have done a good service through their Sunday Schools and otherwise in impressing a kind of moral organisation on the mass of barbarism which surged chaotically into the factory towns. Lancashire theology does not make a man love his neighbour; but its external system promotes cleanliness, truth-telling and chastity; and the zeal of the clergy of all sects, however much we may wish that it had been connected with a more hopeful doctrine, has been a barrier, for which civilisation will always owe something to their name, against the most awful influx the world ever saw of furious provocatives to unbridled sensuality and riotous animalism.

The evangelical movement's excellence as a means of social control lay in its popular vocabulary, its simple message - 'Do not rest Christianity on argument but tell him dogmatically that every word of the Bible was dictated by God Almighty; and add that every word is as plain as the ABC.'<sup>2</sup> - and the ready availability of the code of conduct in the form of the Scriptures. Given the perils England faced the movement had an obvious utility: it had helped save civilised society from the rule of the mob. Confronted with civil disorder the liberals' reaction approximates closely to the horror of their evangelical forebears - those whose purpose was insurrection against society also offended against the providence of God, which was co-ordinate with the law of a civilised society.

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1. Written in 1878; quoted in F.W. Hirst, Early Life and Letters of John Morley (1927), vol.i, p.10.

2. Leslie Stephen, op.cit., vol.ii, p.428.



If law were imperfect, it could be improved, but no such mechanics could restore the 'social tissue' once disorder had torn it apart. Fitzjames Stephen wrote of his recollections of the French Revolution of 1848,<sup>1</sup>

How well I remember my own feelings, which were, I think, the feelings of the great majority of my age and class...of fierce unqualified hatred for the revolution and revolutionists; feelings of the most bitter contempt and indignation against those who feared them, truckled to them, or failed to fight them wheresoever they could and as long as they could: feelings of zeal against all popular aspirations and in favour of all established institutions whatever their various defects or harshnesses (which, however, I wished to alter slowly and moderately): in a word, the feelings of a scandalised policeman towards a mob breaking windows in the cause of humanity.

He then went on to describe graphically how he would have mowed the mob down in the streets and hanged the coward Louis Philippe for not mowing it down. Fitzjames, it is generally admitted, carried 'masculinity' to excess, but his more pacific brother waxed similarly eloquent when he witnessed the Draft Riots in New York in 1863: 'Some good volleys got the brutes under, but there should have been a real good massacre.'<sup>2</sup> The analogy with the evangelical reaction to the French revolution and internal disorder is obvious enough: such disregard of law was not only troublesome and dangerous, it was a sin which cast those who committed it out of the society of men and the mercy of God.

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1. Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, pp.107-8.

2. F.W. Maitland, The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen (1906), p.116.

In 1820 the evangelical divine Thomas Chalmers preached at Glasgow on the execution in London of the Cato Street Conspirators,<sup>1</sup>

There is something in the history of these London executions that is truly dismal. It is like getting a glimpse into Pandemonium; nor do we believe that in the annals of human depravity did ever stout hearted sinners betray a more fierce and unfeeling hardihood... These are the exhibitions of the popular mind after religion has abandoned it. It is neither a system of unchristian morals, nor the meagre Christianity of those who deride, as methodistical, all the peculiarities of our faith, that will recall our neglected population... Nothing will subdue them but that regenerating power which goes along with the faith of the New Testament, and nothing will charm away the alienation of their spirits but the belief in the overtures of redeeming mercy.

The equation between civil disobedience and sinfulness is clearly stated here. While Chalmers saw, with the rest of his generation, religion as the subduing force and reconciler of classes which was to maintain the unity of the nation and secure the continuance of civilised society, he articulated the problem and its remedy in the conventional scriptural terms of the period. When the liberal academics faced up to a similar problem they repeated the evangelical diagnosis: the intellectual developments of the intervening years enabled them to invoke as remedy not popular but irrational scriptural dogmatics, but an approach to politics which was both scientific, and could draw from the mass of the people a 'religious' respect because the individual was inspired by conviction to realise himself in the service of the community. Just as, against the Paleian conception of the 'reasonableness' of

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1. William Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers D.D. (1850), vol.ii, p.271.

religion as a social utility, the evangelicals propagated the ideal of a 'new birth' affecting all ranks of society<sup>1</sup> and unifying the nation in a common bond of religious enthusiasm, so too, against those like Lowe who looked on the franchise as something 'like every other political expedient',<sup>2</sup> the liberals argued for its extension on the grounds that this political equality would convert the class society of the 1860s into a genuine commonwealth, by giving each voter a sense of his individual responsibility to the community.<sup>3</sup> Criticising Matthew Arnold's 'reasonable' argument for culture 'as the great help out of our present difficulties',<sup>4</sup> Henry Sidgwick aptly illustrates the analogy, and, in his reference to religion, demonstrates how what Arnold called its 'fire and strength'<sup>5</sup> could be transferred to a secular gospel, in this case Comtism:<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Arnold may say that he does not discourage action, but only asks for delay, in order that we may act with sufficient knowledge. This is the eternal excuse of indolence - insufficient

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1. See Kiernan, *op.cit.*, p.44.
  2. Robert Lowe M.P., Speeches and Letters (1866), p.105.
  3. See, for example, A.O. Rutson, 'Opportunities and Shortcomings of Government in England' in Essays on Reform, p.305.
  4. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (1869), p.viii.
  5. *Ibid.*, p.107.
  6. Henry Sidgwick, 'The Prophet of Culture' in Macmillan's Magazine, vol.xvi, (1867), reprinted in Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses (1904), pp.56-7.

knowledge: still, taken cautiously, the warning is valuable, and we may thank Mr. Arnold for it: we cannot be too much stimulated to study the laws of the social phenomena that we wish to modify, in order that 'reason the card' may be complete and as accurate as possible. But we remember that we have heard this all before from a very different sort of prophet. It has been preached to us by a school small, but energetic (energetic to a degree that causes Mr. Arnold to scream 'Jacobinism!'): and the preaching has not been in the name of culture but in the name of religion and self-sacrifice.

### III

There is, however, nothing in the evangelical contribution to academic liberal thought which relates directly to the function in society of the universities, beyond a general commitment to the reform of society through existing institutions. Nevertheless the desire to evangelise among the young members of the influential classes at the universities was to produce, by reaction, a development which assigned a prominent place to the university in its social thought, and by its failure was to bequeath this concept to its liberal successors.

Cambridge, which had, at a distance, followed the general social tendencies of the eighteenth century, tolerated and encouraged the proselytising of the evangelicals. Given the temper of the times, it suited the 'quiet good sense' of the place. The initial hostility of the high-and-dry school was overcome,<sup>1</sup> and when Charles Simeon, the evangelical leader, died in 1836, Francis Thornton could write to his father at Clapham of<sup>2</sup>

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1. See Denys Winstanley, Early Victorian Cambridge (1940), c.3.

2. Jackson MSS: Francis Thornton (father-in-law of Henry Jackson) to his father, November 21, 1836.

the gradual dying-away of all hostility towards him in the university, and the respect which had been gradually increasing, till it showed itself in full force yesterday - That was indeed a magnificent spectacle for those who knew in what circumstances Simeon began his course. The heads of houses attended as a body, and all undergraduates were admitted, in mourning.

Subsequently Cambridge faithfully reflected the steady declension in the intensity of upper-class evangelicalism, the 'noticeable divergence'<sup>1</sup> of Sir James Stephen, the 'attitude of the soul rather than a dogmatic creed' of Sir Charles Trevelyan,<sup>2</sup> Leslie Stephen's attempt to commit himself to the broad-churchmanship of Maurice, Sidgwick's flirtation with unitarianism, to the final attitudes of undogmatic theism, scepticism or agnosticism. But the religious question was never the central ground of university politics. 'Of one thing I am certain,' recollected Leslie Stephen,<sup>3</sup>

the Cambridge of these days (the late 1840s and early 1850s) was not an arena for struggles between Church parties. Individuals might belong to what were then called the 'High', 'Low' or 'Broad' parties; but their differences did not form the ground for any division in University politics. We left such matters to Oxford.

At Oxford the tradition had never been one of accommodation to the intellectual and political mores of the time. The university had always been high church, and within recent times had affected Jacobitism. The general atmosphere was thus uncongenial to evangelicalism. Further, there lurked

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1. Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, p.55.

2. G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, p.7.

3. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions (1924), p.56, and Lewis Campbell, The Nationalisation of the Old English Universities, p.61.

within it influences yet more critical of 'the increasing meagreness of its writing and preaching',<sup>1</sup> the small but intelligent and active party of liberals associated with Oriel. 'The Noetics,' wrote Mark Pattison,<sup>2</sup>

knew nothing of the philosophical movement which was taking place on the continent; they were influenced neither with Kant nor with Rousseau, yet this knot of Oriel was distinctly the product of the French Revolution. They called everything in question; they appealed to first principles and disallowed authority as a judge in intellectual matters. There was a wholesome intellectual ferment maintained in the Oriel common room, of that kind which was so dreaded by the authorities of the German States in the days of the Terror (1851).

It is thus not surprising that, at a time when elsewhere the growing formality and aridity of evangelical dogma was pushing the more intelligent of its former adherents into more sophisticated theological positions, there should be a similar revulsion from its asperities and absurdities at Oxford. But the distinctive conservative isolation of Oxford meant that this revulsion took the form of adhesion to, and reinforcement of, the dominant high church. The Noetics, although well equipped to demonstrate the shallowness of scriptural fundamentalism,<sup>3</sup>

were dry, cold, supercilious, critical; they wanted enthusiasm; they were out of sympathy with religion and the religious temper and aims... They patronised Dissenters, they gave Whig votes; they made free, in a mild way, with the pet conventions of Tories and High Churchmen. There was nothing inspiring in them, however much men might respect their correct and sincere lives.

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1. R.W. Church, The Oxford Movement, 1833-1845 (1891), p.13.

2. Mark Pattison, Memoirs (1885), p.79.

3. R.W. Church, op.cit., p.338.



Moreover they were conscious of being a Whig minority in a Tory university, and so felt no particular loyalty to the place; if Oxford was inimical to their ideas, they could, and did, go elsewhere - Whately to Dublin, Arnold to Rugby, Coplestone to Llandaff. One is struck, on reading Church's hostile judgement of them (quoted above), at the similarity in tone to Sidgwick's rejection of the 'reasonableness' of Matthew Arnold; the 'fire and strength' of the young evangelicals at Oxford - Faber, the Wilberforces, Newman, Gladstone<sup>1</sup> - found its outlet in the revivifying of the high church tradition and the defence of the prerogatives of the church in a time of constitutional upheaval. They saw that the traditional links between state and church could simply be used to tailor the authority and doctrine of the latter to suit the political convenience of the former. 'No doubt,' commented John Morley,<sup>2</sup>

the mere occasion of tractarianism was political. Its leaders were alarmed at the designs imputed to the newly-formed parliament of disestablishing the Anglican Church. They asked themselves the question, which I will put in their own words (Tract i.) - 'Should the government of the country so far forget their God as to cut off the Church, to deprive it of its temporal honours and substance, on what will you rest the claims to respect and attention which you make upon your flock?' In answering this question they speedily found themselves at the opposite pole of thought from things political. The whole strength of their appeal to members of the Church lay in men's weariness of the high and dry optimism which presents the existing order of things as the noblest possible, and the undisturbed way of the majority as the way of salvation... Conspicuous as were the intellectual faults of the Oxford Movement, it was at any rate a recognition in a very forcible way of the doctrine that spiritual matters are not to be settled by the dicta of a political council.

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1. Annan, Leslie Stephen, p.121.

2. John Morley, On Compromise (1874), Thinker's Library Edition, 1933, p.56.

To Morley the Movement was a distinct advance in that it exalted personal conviction and rejected acquiescence in a 'politique' settlement:<sup>1</sup>

It acknowledged that a man is answerable at his own peril for having found or lost the truth. It is a warning that he must reckon with a judge who will not account the status quo, nor the convenience of a cabinet, a good plea for indolent acquiescence in error. It ended, in the case of its most vigorous champions, in a final and deliberate putting out of the eyes of the understanding.

To the liberals the Movement was at once a vindication of individuality and, in the very deliberateness of the act of 'putting out the eyes of the understanding', of reason and logic. The tragedy of the situation stemmed from reason and logic being employed on inferences drawn from archaic dogmatics. Mark Pattison remarked of Newman that <sup>2</sup>

He threw off not only the scum of democratic lawlessness, but the allegiance which the individual understanding owes to the universal reason, and too hastily concluded that authority could supply a basis for philosophical belief.

For Newman the source of authority lay in the Roman Catholic Church, and his action in 'going over' in 1845, could not, of course, in the context of Anglican Oxford, do anything other than damage the principle of authority within the Church of England he and his allies had originally set out to assert. Liberal commentators could appreciate the tragedy involved in the rejection of 'the universal reason', but they could also appreciate the destructive effect the secession had on the arguments of those who supported the religious exclusiveness of the universities.

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1. Morley, op.cit., p.56.

2. Mark Pattison, 'Philosophy at Oxford' in Mind, vol.i, (1877), p.85.



Pusey bluntly defined 'the problem and special work' of a University, as<sup>1</sup>

not how to advance science, not how to make discoveries, not how to form new schools of mental philosophy, nor to invent new modes of analysis, not to produce works in Medicine, Jurisprudence, or even Theology; but to form minds religiously, morally, intellectually, which shall discharge aright whatever duties God, in his providence, shall appoint to them.

And Gladstone in 1834, opposing in the Commons a bill to admit dissenters, was no less explicit:<sup>2</sup>

the object of the founders and benefactors of these institutions was the maintenance of the Established Church, and the cultivation of its doctrines in the rising generation of the country. For eight hundred years that wholesome object had been kept in view, and the Universities had become the preparatory seminaries to the Church Establishment... The Universities had been spoken of as national institutions. He admitted the term, but not in the sense with which it was generally put forth. They were undoubtedly national institutions but only in so far as they were connected with the National Church. To attain this a certain fixed course of study and of discipline must be observed. But how could this be done when by the Bill before the house it was proposed to throw open their doors not only to Dissenting Christians of every sect and denomination, but also to all sorts of persons, be they Christians or not? This he hoped the Church would never allow.

After the secessions of 1845 this argument lost much of what plausibility it had. Only two months after the trial before Convocation and Degradation (loss of degree) of W.G. Ward, which Church characterised as 'not only the final defeat and

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1. Quoted in C.E. Mallet, A History of the University of Oxford vol.iii, (1924), p.320.

2. W.E. Gladstone: speech in the House of Commons in the debate on the third reading of Joseph Hume's Universities Admission Bill, July 28 1834. Hansard 3rd series, vol. xxv, col.636.

conclusion of the first stage of the movement (but)...the birthday of the modern Liberalism of Oxford',<sup>1</sup> W.D. Christie, the Liberal M.P. for Weymouth, a unitarian who had been educated but had not taken his degree at Cambridge, moved for a Royal Commission on the Universities, and adduced in support the theological turmoil at Oxford:<sup>2</sup>

What is the result of all your endeavours to unite the University and the Church in an indissoluble theological alliance and 'crib, cabin, and confine' the theology of the University within the limits of the Thirty-nine Articles? Why that, under the very greatest disadvantages, after having been kept down by the heavy incubus of Oxford and Cambridge conservatism, learning has at last proclaimed her independence - burst your theological fetters - ay, and dragged the Church after the Universities into a latitude of theological speculation which well beseems a place of learning, but is utterly subversive of the foundations of the Church; and the Church of England is at the moment shaken to its centre. The history of Oxford, during the last nine years, is indeed a striking commentary on your vaunted union of the Universities and the Church of England.

'His speech,' commented Lewis Campbell, 'marks the beginning of an understanding between the Nonconformists...and some of the younger liberals at Oxford.'<sup>3</sup>

The critical contribution of the Movement was that, which it continued to uphold the responsibility of the individual to his own conscience,<sup>4</sup> it institutionalised this concern in the university and opened up the whole

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1. Church, op.cit., p.340.

2. and 3. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.52.

4. Compare, for example, J.H. Newman's letter to James Hope Scott, November 16 1844, with that of his brother's to Moncure Conway. (p.27 of this chapter): 'What keeps me here is what has kept me long; a fear that I am under a delusion; but the conviction remains firm under all circumstances, in all frames of mind. And this most serious feeling is growing on me; viz. that the reasons for which I believe as much as our system teaches, must lead me to believe more, and that not to believe more is to fall back into scepticism. (Apologia, p.207.)

question of the role of the university in society. At the level of 'reasonableness' it showed the danger of maintaining the Anglican seminary conception at a time when the whole basis of Anglicanism was being called in question within the Church, and the Church itself was being shown to be representative of only a minority of the nation. The university must make itself 'national' and its studies relevant, if external forces were not to seize on its internal aberrations as an excuse for drastic intervention. This, by and large, was the position of the Broad Church party, of Jowett, Stanley, and the Cambridge reformers. But the dialogue between 'reasonableness' and 'vital religion' continued, and was paralleled by a debate on the purpose of the university. 'Vital religion', the quest for a 'Weltanschauung', now committed itself to the system of secular liberalism and a restructuring of society, with the universities supplying the leadership of the forces of change. Both schools, however - the 'reasonable' school initially by far the larger - united in campaigning for change, and both were later to unite in paying tribute, without irony, to Newman as the man more than any other responsible for it. When he visited Oxford in 1878 an Anglo-Catholic clergyman, Frederick Meyrick, sourly observed:<sup>1</sup>

At dinner his health was given by Professor Bryce, who congratulated him on having brought about a state of theological liberalism or indifferentism in Oxford, the one thing which

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1. F. Meyrick, Memories (1905), p.26.

from the beginning of his life to its end he abhorred...it was his old enemies, whom he had fought a outrance, and whose principles he hated now from the bottom of his heart, who flocked round him as their champion, and thanked him for what he had done in demolishing the power of the Church of England in Oxford.

## IV

To Mark Pattison the Movement was at best an emetic.

It purged the university of the malignant virus of clerical dogma:<sup>1</sup>

...the period of Tractarianism had been a period of obscurantism, which had cut us off from the general movement; an eclipse which had shut out the light of the sun in heaven. Whereas other reactions accomplished themselves by imperceptible degrees, in 1845 the darkness was dissipated, and the light was let in in an instant, as by the opening of the shutters in the chamber of a sick man who has slept till midday. Hence the flood of reform, which broke over Oxford in the next few years following 1845, and did not spend itself till it had produced two government commissions, until we had ourselves enlarged and remodelled all our institutions...

In two respects Pattison's judgement seems inaccurate. For the first, I hope I have shown that other liberals, especially that generation who were to carry their liberalism into political activity, entertained a high degree of respect for the Movement. Morley, for instance, deprecated Pattison's vehemence:<sup>2</sup>

Others can forgive anything sooner than their own exploded ideal, and the ghost of their dead enthusiasm haunts them with an embittering presence. Pattison drops a good many expressions about his Anglo-Catholic days that betray something like vindictiveness - which is certainly not philosophical, whatever else it was.

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1. Pattison, Memoirs, p.238.

2. John Morley, 'On Pattison's Memoirs' in Miscellanies (1886), vol.iii, p.149.

Second, there certainly wasn't a rush of intellectual freedom hard on the heels of the fleeing Tractarians. It took Pattison himself most of the five years which elapsed between Newman's 'going over' and the announcement of the Royal Commission to lapse from his catholicism.<sup>1</sup> There seems generally to have been little in the way of a strong force of positive liberalism. 'The Liberals of his school,' wrote Church of Stanley,<sup>2</sup> 'were then (1845) still a little flock: a very distinguished and a very earnest set of men, but too young and too few.' Indeed, after the spectacular collapse of the Movement, we have the impression of a mental vacuum at Oxford - the Oxford of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough - of disorientation and unsettlement: of 'the sick fatigue, the languid doubt'.<sup>3</sup>

Twenty years later Henry Sidgwick, to whom aspects of Clough's character appealed, wrote sympathetically of his irresolution:<sup>4</sup>

He would not accept either false solutions or no solutions, nor, unless very reluctantly, provisional solutions. At the same time he saw just as clearly as other men that the continued contemplation of insoluble problems is not merely impractical but anti-practical; and that a healthy and natural instinct forces most men, after a few years of feverish youthful agitation, to turn away from it. But with this instinct Clough's passion for absolute truth conflicted...

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1. Pattison, *op.cit.*, p.229. He made himself ill in 1847 because of his ascetic behaviour.
  2. Church, *op.cit.*, p.340.
  3. Matthew Arnold, 'The Scholar Gipsy', l.164; also H.W.C. Davis, Balliol College (1899), p.147.
  4. Henry Sidgwick, 'Clough's Poems' in the Westminster Review (August 1869). In Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses, p.65.

In this passage Sidgwick states what was to become the critical dilemma of the liberal academic. Three years earlier he had written to a friend, 'In the present age an educated man must either be prophet or persistent sceptic - there seems no media via.'<sup>1</sup> When he wrote this he was deeply interested in Clough's work. 'To no-one', he wrote to Mrs. Clough,<sup>2</sup>

could Clough be an object of more intense individual interest than myself. I suppose that everyone has some one book of poems to which he turns in any solitary mood that demands special sympathy: such a book, in these latter years, have I had in Clough's poems.

By this time, and subsequently to a much greater degree with the freeing of the universities from the clerical yoke and the commencement of the debate on the future direction of university education associated with the movement for the endowment of research, Clough's dilemma had an obvious relevance. From that uneasy interlude between the rout of the Movement and the advance of the liberals he had predicted the eventual bifurcation of the latter force, the tension between prophet and sceptic, between teacher and scholar, between Benjamin Jowett and Mark Pattison, between T.H. Green and Henry Sidgwick. For the moment, however, this was in the future. Action, and the dispelling of this miasma of irresolute speculation, waited on the gradual grouping of the liberal forces.

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1. Henry Sidgwick - Graham Dakyns, December 8 1866, quoted in A.S. & E.M.S. Henry Sidgwick, a Memoir (1906), p.158.
  2. Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick - Mrs. Clough, April 27, 1866.



Besides the collapse of the Movement, Pattison briskly adduced the Railway Mania and the continental revolutions of 1848 as the causes of the liberal advance.<sup>1</sup> Although Pattison was given to the sweeping generalisation, there is an element of truth in both. The spectacle of dons turned railway financiers, swept from theology into speculation of a different kind, then cast down when the bubble burst, does not seem a particularly apt overture to a reform movement. But if we remember that June 12 1844 saw the first train arrive in Oxford from Paddington, then the railway assumes a new significance. The isolation of the university towns had become a thing of the past. The newspapers reached them early on the day of printing. Young fellows at the bar or in journalism in London could easily come up for an evening's consultation with their resident colleagues. Just as, later on, it was significant that regular consultation between Oxford and Cambridge dons in the shape of the Ad Eundem dinners<sup>2</sup> followed by two years the opening of the last section of the Oxford to Cambridge line, so the railways built in the 1840s pulled the universities closer to the intellectual life of the capital. On the other hand they enabled the clerical party to rustle up droves of country parsons to vote down reform measures in Convocation and Senate at Oxford and Cambridge respectively. But the first was undoubtedly the more significant for the future of the liberal movement in that it facilitated the alliance of residents and London professional men which was the axis on

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1. Pattison, Memoirs, pp.234-5.

2. The railway was opened throughout in October 1862. The Ad Eundem was founded at the end of 1864 and had its first dinner in February 1865. (Jackson MSS: Sir George Young - Henry Jackson, June 12, 1907.)

which the reform movement at both universities pivoted.

That the revolutionary spirit of 1848 played a part in stimulating the liberal movement is less in doubt. Of the new generation of Liberals 'who had been formed under Arnold at Rugby', Grant Duff said:<sup>1</sup>

hardly had they begun to fill the void than the new burst of liberal opinion, which shook half the thrones of the Continent, came to scatter medieval fancies. Those who were at Oxford in those days will not readily forget the abiding change which the events of that year produced, increasing tenfold the interest in and knowledge of the Continent - its social, political, and religious modes of thought.

Lewis Campbell was inclined to be more sceptical:<sup>2</sup>

On the whole it seems improbable that the events of 1848, either at home or abroad, had any important events on Oxford politics or on Oxford studies.

but admitted that Jowett, who had visited Paris during the revolution, 'could not remain unaffected by a great European change which had come immediately under his view.' More specifically, the events of 1848, bringing forth the Broad Church militant in the guise of Christian Socialism, were to stimulate the social sympathies, and eventually to overtax the religious faith, of many devout and radically minded university men. But more of that later. 1848 was really only one of several factors, the incremental effect of which was to give momentum to the liberal cause. There was the

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1. M.E. Grant Duff M.P., Speech of 16 March 1864, on the Tests Abolition Bill. Hansard 3rd series, vol.clxiv, cols.117-8.

2. Evelyn Abbott & Lewis Campbell, Life of Benjamin Jowett (1897), vol.i, pp.135-6.



repeal of the Corn Laws<sup>1</sup> and the split in the Tory party which led to the return of a Whig-Peelite majority in parliament. There was the influx of Rugbeians, noted by Grant Duff and Church.<sup>2</sup> Arnold himself had been Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford for a year before his death in 1842. His coming, wrote Goldwin Smith, 'was a terror and a horror to the dominant High Church Party',<sup>3</sup> a liberal false dawn. The true dawn broke when Stanley published the Life in 1844, and created the Rugby legend. That the legend had a fairly solid basis of reality I have shown elsewhere;<sup>4</sup> what was important was that the flight of the tractarians left open to the young liberals the field of college tuition. The Balliol of Oakeley and Ward became the Balliol of Lake, Palmer and Jowett. The terrorism of Ward, who exploited his logical brilliance in the interest of catholic dogmatics, 'Believe in nothing or believe in the one true Church!'<sup>5</sup> was replaced by Jowett's sympathetic cultivation of the abilities of his pupils, and the wide speculation he at that time encouraged and himself indulged in.<sup>6</sup> Although 'Greats' at Oxford prescribed a course of study which was conservatively classical in its literary approach to the texts, such philosophical aspects as it had came increasingly to be studied,

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1. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, pp.74-5.

2. Church, op.cit., p.338.

3. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, pp.67-8.

4. See Appendix 1.

5. H.W.C. Davis, Balliol College, p.187.

6. Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, pp.126-30.

in the more progressive colleges, alongside and in the light of modern philosophical writers. The encouragement of the new generation of dons, and the light rein on which they kept their charges, combined with the informality of studies to lead undergraduates into a latitude of speculation unthinkable a few years earlier. The reliance an able undergraduate had to place on his own reading can be seen from the detailed lists the young Gladstone kept of the books he read at Oxford fifteen or sixteen years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Now that theology had been dethroned, this emphasis on self-culture led to a rapid absorption in contemporary liberal thought. The liberal lamp, burning with slowly increasing brightness at Cambridge among the Apostles, now began to flare up at Oxford. That 'young ardent soul looking with hope and joy into a world overclouded to the zenith and the nadir of it by incredible uncredited traditions, solemnly sordid hypocrisies, and beggarly deliriums old and new'<sup>2</sup> made his presence felt in the common rooms where only a year or so earlier talk had been of Patristics and the Eucharist.

While the secularisation of the university intellect (dramatically indicated by the substitution by the 1860s of the vocabulary of the physical sciences for that of religion in what Cambridge knew as the Moral Sciences - logic, ethics, politics and economics) was essentially the product of

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1. The Gladstone Diaries. ed. M.R.D. Foot, vol.i, (1968), covering years 1826-1831; see also F. Harrison, The Creed of a Layman (1907), pp.15-8.

2. Thomas Carlyle on John Sterling, quoted in Campbell, Nationalisation, p.23.

the combination of factors previously mentioned, it took time to evolve into the orthodoxy it later became. Meanwhile 'the healthy and natural instinct' to close with the offer of a 'provisional solution' Sidgwick had noticed led many young university men to identify themselves with the theological and social views of the broad church. In the transient absorption of many, especially at Cambridge, in the theology of F.D. Maurice, and the more lasting devotion of university men to the social and educational projects of the Christian Socialists, in the five or six years after 1848, we can see how the desire to realise a social role for the university in the nation temporarily overtook the progress of 'scientific' social and political thought within it. From the philosophic point of view it was the last attempt to see this social role in religious terms, and after its failure religion was relegated to the margin of academic speculation. The various concrete projects of the Christian Socialists, however, were to exercise some influence in the mature political thought of the academic liberals.

## V

The central concern of the Movement was the nature of religious authority. Although its followers did not totally ignore social questions, they occupied only a tiny fraction of their attention. Their peripheral nature can be demonstrated by the lack of any philosophical connection between their theological speculation and social intervention. The Movement in no way presages the 'sacerdotal socialism' of

the High Church party at the end of the century. Liddon, it is true, was militantly opposed to the severities of the Poor Laws,<sup>1</sup> and Max Beer wrote, generalising rather ambitiously from a couple of passages in Hurrell Froude's Remains, that<sup>2</sup>

there was much social reform and even  
democratic sentiment among its leaders,

but the overall picture is not one which emphasises any distinctive approach to social problems. Indeed, it's worth noting that the leaders of the Movement - Marriott, Froude, Morris, Newman, Pusey, Keble and Isaac Williams - were, in 1836, active members of the Oxford Society for the Suppression of Mendicity,<sup>3</sup> formed with the best utilitarian and individualistic objects in view by the liberal Whately in 1828.<sup>4</sup>

The problems of society played, on the other hand, a central role in the theology of the Broad Church. Dr. Duncan Forbes, the historian of the liberal anglican movement, has contrasted it and its Oxford rival:<sup>5</sup>

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1. Dictionary of National Biography, (D.N.B.)
  2. Max Beer, History of British Socialism (1919), vol.i, pp.273-4.
  3. Annual Report of Oxford Society for the Suppression of Mendicity (1836).
  4. *Ibid.*, (1886).
  5. Duncan Forbes, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History (1952), p.101.



The response of the Oxford Movement to the crisis of civilisation was to lay stress on opposition and correction as the special work and glory of the Church; the Liberal Anglicans emphasised the sustaining and befriending aspects of religion. The one was moved by the spirit of dogma, the other by the spirit of history.

Essentially the Liberal Anglican movement was the product of German idealist historical scholarship out of the romantic conservatism of Coleridge. It rejected the 'Enlightenment' conception of 'progress', of increasing 'civilisation', discovering in the study of the material facts of history merely a series of cycles in which nations and civilisations arose, flourished, then fell back.<sup>1</sup> 'True progress' writes Dr. Forbes, 'is therefore synonymous with the development of true religion, that is to say, with Christianity.'<sup>2</sup> The crises which beset society in the 1830s and 1840s seemed to indicate that the decline of English civilisation was at hand, and the responsibility for its redemption lay with the Church. 'Christianity is to be wrought out fully,' wrote Stanley, 'not by the destruction of the kingdoms of the world but by their adaptation with all their power, literature and institutions to its own divine ends.'<sup>3</sup> One such institution which could fruitfully be adapted was of course the university, and from its commencement in 1848 the Christian Socialist movement - the practical embodiment of the Liberal Anglican ideal, drew heavily on the universities for its direction.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., p.39.

2. Ibid., p.82.

3. Ibid., p.99.

4. Politics for the People, issued from 6 May 1848, had contributions by Maurice, Whately, Trench, Thirlwall, Conington and Stanley. See Max Beer, History of British Socialism, vol.i, p.186.

Although there was some enthusiasm for the co-operative industrial projects of the Christian Socialists among a few radical spirits at Oxford, and a few more at Cambridge<sup>1</sup>

who for a testimony were content to wear strange patterned and ill-fitting trousers, made in the workshops of the Christian Socialist tailor,

enthusiasm which was carried over into the economic thought of the academic liberal writers of the 1860s in their schemes for the co-operative control of industry, the educational projects of Maurice and his colleagues were more attractive to the university men. A large number of them taught at the Working Men's College, founded by Maurice in 1854 - Chenevix Trench, W. Johnson Cory, Nevil Story-Maskeleyne, Grant Duff, H.J.S. Smith, Charles Pearson<sup>2</sup> - and similar institutions were subsequently founded at Oxford and Cambridge. The Macmillan brothers, Montague Butler and later Henry Sidgwick were involved in the Cambridge project<sup>3</sup> and Maskeleyne, Smith, J.H. Bridges and George Brodrick in its Oxford counterpart.<sup>4</sup> This absorption seems to represent a transitional stage in the political and philosophical development of the university liberal mind. Politically, Maurice, the theorist of Christian Socialism, was a conservative figure, who had deserted the rationalism of his Unitarian background for the idealist, Coleridgean concept of an

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1. Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i., pp.135-6.

2. The Working Men's College, 1854-1904 (1904), pp.15-17.

3. A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.61.

4. Programme of Oxford Working Men's Educational Institution (1854), in Oxford local history collection, Bodleian Library.



ordered and organic community.<sup>1</sup> His theories were not subversive of existing institutions: 'We want the Church fully to understand her own foundation, fully to work out the communism which is implied in her own existence.' Rather they implied that such institutions should live up to the responsibilities they had shirked for so long. The implication of this for the post-Tractarian university was obvious.

The other dimension of the attraction of Christian Socialism was Maurice's theology itself, attractive to a generation in recoil from the dogmatic principle which had activated Newman as much as the evangelicals, and beginning to be seriously disturbed by the effect on religious speculation of discoveries in the natural sciences.

'Young men', wrote Leslie Stephen,<sup>2</sup>

who were not prepared to 'swallow all formulas' and, like Herr Teufelsdröck, strip themselves stark naked, read Coleridge, and found the most attractive contemporary leader in the admirable F.D. Maurice. He, they thought, might be taken as a guide to the promised land where orthodox dogma in alliance with philosophy could also be reconciled with science and criticism. Maurice undeniably was one of the most attractive and saint-like of men. He was clearly sincere even to an excess of scrupulosity. His very weaknesses and excess of sensibility gave to his friends the sense that they were the bodyguard of an unworldly teacher.

Conservative though Maurice's views essentially were, and timid though his Christian Socialist activities turned out to be in comparison with those of his colleagues, he was frowned on by the party of orthodoxy and in 1853, just

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1. See Torben Christensen, Christian Socialism (1962), c.1.

2. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, pp.63-4.

before the formation of the Working Men's College, had been dismissed from his post as Professor of Theology at King's College, London; this, if anything, enhanced his appeal. Yet the affinity between him and the university men was temporary, purely the intersection of the constant of his mystic faith in the 'Infinite, Incomprehensible, Jehova' and the descending curve of their belief. Young men like the Stephen brothers and Grant Duff<sup>1</sup> were attracted to him because he promised to reconcile the notion of a transcendent providence with humanistic values. In the event Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen found this merely degenerated into an act of semantic juggling:<sup>2</sup>

Look, he would say, at the plain words of scripture, and do you not find - it is hard to say what, but he used to imply, in various ways, that the simple natural sense of the words used was something quite different from what everyone habitually supposed it to be... Does not Tweedledum rightly understood mean Tweedledee, and does not that make all the difference?

It was not the unsatisfactory nature of its philosophy which alone deprived the liberal anglican theory of religion and politics of its credibility. The crisis of civilisation, that denouement at which the role of hero would be taken by the Church muscular and militant, didn't turn up. With the economic upswing out of the depression of the forties, following on the repeal of the Corn Laws and Navigation Acts, the nostrums of materialist philosophy seemed to give proof

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1. M.E. Grant Duff, Notes from a Diary, 1851-1872, vol.i., (1897), p.78.

2. Stephen MSS: Fitzjames Stephen, Autobiographical Fragment, p.36.



of their efficacy,<sup>1</sup> and the prophecies and programmes of the liberal anglicans, as Dr. Forbes puts it, 'ran into the sands.'<sup>2</sup> But the dislocation attendant on the collapse of the Oxford Movement was not repeated in the universities; indeed it could be argued that the contemporary growth of interest in utilitarian logic, ethics and social philosophy among university men naturally elbowed out other less systematic approaches, as the propositions of the new views seemed verifiable in terms of their practical performance. In a splendid piece of liberal determinism Mark Pattison postulated a direct link between the domination of the clerical party and the use of a priori logic in the Schools: the secession of Newman was the occasion for the installation of Mill's 'Logic' - 'Oxford repudiated at once sacerdotal principles and Kantian logic.'<sup>3</sup> Making allowance for Pattison's tendency to over-dramatise, there is a good deal of truth in this; but the clinching argument the utilitarians could advance was the success enjoyed by such measures of theirs as were adopted by government. To tutors like Jowett who were alive to the future prospects of their charges, the necessity to assimilate the pattern of university thought to that which was coming to prevail outside was self-evident. Again the 'reasonable' argument was employed. Just as Paley had seen reason in the use of

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1. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, pp.74-5

2. Duncan Forbes, *op.cit.*, p.119.

3. Mark Pattison, Memoirs, pp.165-7

religion as a means of social control, so the moderate university reformers of the 1850s saw utilitarian thought as a cement of existing institutions. Like their evangelical forebears, however, the younger academics were determined to 'go further' - to fashion out of the new knowledge a philosophy of life.

That Leslie Stephen used Herr Teufelsdröck from Sartor Resartus to state the alternative to F.D. Maurice testifies to the influence on the younger university men of Thomas Carlyle, and it's worthwhile at this stage to consider the marginal but nevertheless significant role his writings played.

Carlyle's view of society and his scathing indictment of the values of nineteenth century liberalism - possibly today the most influential part of his writing<sup>1</sup> - seems to have made little impression on them. What was significant was his reinterpretation of the religious impulse in terms of a secular standard of individual personality and effort. Naturally, this aroused a response amongst the former evangelicals.<sup>2</sup>

You might return from the strange gleam and splendour of the French Revolution or Sartor Resartus revolted or fascinated; but to read it with appreciation was to go through an intellectual crisis; and to enter into this spirit was to experience something like a religious conversion. You were not the same man afterwards. No-one ever exercised such a potent sway over the inmost being of his disciples.

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1. See Raymond Williams, Culture and Society (1958), c.4.

2. Annan, Leslie Stephen, p.307.

Thus Leslie Stephen who, although continually in disagreement with 'the old prophet', revered him.<sup>1</sup> The same could be said for other university men whose philosophies differed widely from his, like T.H. Green<sup>2</sup> and Edward Caird<sup>3</sup> at Oxford. To Caird Carlyle was 'the greatest literary influence of his student days' who had brought British culture into the European mainstream. 'He knew the standard around which henceforth the battle was to be fought.'<sup>4</sup>

The utilitarian Stephen might differ from the idealist Caird on Carlyle's cultural importance, and, politically, disagreements between the younger liberals and the 'prophet' were fundamental enough. When Leslie Stephen criticised his brother's anti-democratic polemic Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (1873), he attributed Fitzjames' backsliding to Carlyle's influence.<sup>5</sup> But the insistence on 'plain speaking', on the casting-off of 'Hebrew old clothes', on fulfilment through personal effort rather than through obedience to the dictates of received authority, were not only powerful endorsements of the developing cast of the academic mind, but provided a significant addition to the secular vocabulary in

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1. Annan, op.cit., p.306.

2. Nettleship, 'Memoir of T.H. Green', p.xxv.

3. Sir Henry Jones & J.H. Muirhead, The Life and Work of Edward Caird (1921), pp.22, 59.

4. Jones & Muirhead, op.cit., pp.25-6.

5. Maitland, Leslie Stephen, p.230.

which the academics were increasingly expressing themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Carlyle cannot, I think, be credited with a seminal role in the development of the academic mind, in the same way in which he undoubtedly contributed to the criticism of industrial society by creative artists and writers and working-class leaders throughout the latter two-thirds of the century. But his exhortations, when they reached the universities, fell on receptive ground. They did not indicate solutions, but they adjured effort, truthfulness and moral courage. They may have been directed against liberal individualism, but in the context of the universities in the 1840s and 1850s they eased the transition to it.

## VI

The Logic of John Stuart Mill appeared in the spring of 1843. Although he had been engaged in the work for several years, his application to it was stimulated by a confrontation with a distinctive university figure, William Whewell, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Whewell - whom one wit alleged had written his Essay on Plurality of Worlds to prove that as the Master of the greatest college of the greatest university of the greatest nation on the only possible inhabited planet he was entitled the deference due to the prime intellectual of the universe - had produced in 1837 his Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences. This was a resolute defence of intuition in philosophy; intuition

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1. Annan, op.cit., p.85.

was proof to Whewell of the divine spirit at work in man and embodied in the traditional institutions of society.

'I could not possibly believe,' Whewell wrote in 1842 to a friend,<sup>1</sup>

that Providence has thus enabled man to discover moral and social truth, and to embody it in his institutions, if I believed that man had as yet made no progress in doing this, and that the great step was still to be made - that we were to learn our duty and our work by some new lights entirely different from the old ones.

Thus spoke the Conservative party-man. Mill's reply was equally forthright:<sup>2</sup>

The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the object of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification.

Uncompromisingly radical though its purpose was, Mill's System of Logic had run into three editions by 1850, to the surprise of its author. Even more unexpected was the impact it made on the universities.<sup>3</sup>

'No one thinker', recollected Henry Sidgwick on his deathbed, 'so far as I know has ever had anything like equal influence in the forty years or so that have elapsed since Mill's domination began to weaken.'<sup>4</sup> The Cambridge of

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1. William Whewell - James Garth Marshall, December 27, 1842, in Mrs. Stair Douglas, Life of William Whewell D.D. (1881), p.280.
  2. John Stuart Mill, Autobiography (1873), World's Classics Ed., 1963, p.191.
  3. Ibid., p.190.
  4. Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick, Autobiographical Fragment, (dictated August 13, 1900).

Leslie Stephen and Henry Fawcett regarded him as the ultimate court of appeal for all moral, political or philosophic questions: 'In our little circle the summary answer to all hesitating proselytes was "read Mill".'<sup>1</sup> 'Mill's disciples', Stephen went on, 'claimed with complete confidence to be in possession of a definite and scientific system of economical, political and ethical truth. They were calmly convinced that all objectors, from Carlyle downwards, were opposed to him as dreamers to logicians....' At Oxford, wrote Pattison, 'For more than a quarter of this century Mill and nominalistic views reigned in the schools.'<sup>2</sup> However the utilitarianism the universities then absorbed was different from the dry, philistine creed of Bentham and the elder Mill. John Stuart had been deeply interested by the critiques of mechanistic rationalism voiced by Coleridge and the Saint-Simonians. In particular he was arrested by the Saint-Simonian division of history into critical and organic periods: critical periods occurred when a corpus of doctrine, having helped humanity so far along the road of progress in an 'organic' period, no longer served, and had to be overthrown and a new creed, suitably 'advanced' erected in its place. Auguste Comte made this division more sophisticated by postulating a natural development of human knowledge in all its departments. Such phenomena were interpreted first theologically, later in terms of metaphysics, ultimately in terms of verifiable scientific laws.'<sup>3</sup>

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1. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, pp.75-6.

2. Mark Pattison, Memoirs, p.166.

3. Mill, Autobiography, pp.138, 140.

The feudal and Catholic system was the concluding phase of the theological state of the social science, Protestantism the commencement, and the doctrines of the French Revolution the consummation of the metaphysical;...its positive state was yet to come.

From a position of disenchantment with the intellectual barrenness of Benthamism, Mill saw Comte's doctrine as indicating the prospect of real moral and intellectual progress. The inconsistency involved in attempting to square the individualism of Bentham with the cultivation of the intellect demanded by Coleridge could be seen as a peculiarity of a transitional, or 'critical' period. Methodical research into the relationships of the sciences, of morals, of the mind, of society, would enable a systematic start to be made to the process of overcoming the inconsistency. 'I looked forward', wrote Mill,<sup>1</sup>

to a future which shall unite the best qualities of the critical with the best qualities of the organic periods; unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful to others; but also, convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and in the true exigencies of life, that they shall not, like all former and present creeds, religious, ethical and political, require to be periodically thrown off and replaced by others.

This statement itself has obvious inconsistencies: convictions of what is right or wrong are held to be justifiable on common-sense grounds and also held to be contingent on the findings of social research. Yet its attraction for men

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1. Mill, Autobiography, pp.140-1.



reared amongst the imperatives of evangelicalism, yet conscious also of a loyalty to the university as an institution which could perform such social research, is self-evident. The evangelical impulse is personified by Henry Fawcett in his devotion to the master's On Liberty:<sup>1</sup>

As I was reading Mill's Liberty, perhaps the greatest work of our greatest living writer, as I read his noble, I might almost say his holy, ideas, I thought to myself; if everyone in my country could and would read this work, how infinitely happier would the nation be.

It could be argued that Fawcett never in fact got past the acolyte stage, being content to expound rather than to develop. Nevertheless others of the academics used the Logic as the groundwork for research in the social sciences and, like Mill, many turned to Comte for a theoretical framework. The Comtist contribution to social thought at the universities tended subsequently to be undervalued, even by those who owed a great deal to it. Possibly this was on account of the absurdities of religious Positivism, which led a number of very able men - Harrison, Beesly, Congreve, Bridges - to spend most of the 1870s reproducing the old liturgical wrangles in their new Church of Humanity. 'I consider myself to have learnt very much from Comte', wrote Leslie Stephen in 1882 to Henry Sidgwick,<sup>2</sup>

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1. Leslie Stephen, Life of Henry Fawcett (1885), p.102.

2. Sidgwick MSS: Leslie Stephen - Henry Sidgwick, October 10, 1882.

and I have a higher estimate of him than most people do, especially the scientific people who object to his religion. I only think that evolutionists have made his theory workable and have brought it into a quasi-scientific state more thoroughly than he could do. But I agree that most of my morality is contained in his.

And the Boston unitarian William Everett observed to Henry Jackson that when he went up to Cambridge his unitarianism was considered 'heretic or Socinian', but the opinion of his contemporaries 'positive - anti-religious - Spencerian Comtist' advanced so rapidly that 'they thought me antiquated in 1865 and a hopeless old tory in 1869.'<sup>1</sup> However Comtism could not totally satisfy the demands of the evangelical conscience, either as an historical explanation or as a corpus of ethical truth. The concept of a 'Science of Ethics' - Leslie Stephen's choice of title for the work defended in the letter to Sidgwick quoted above was significant enough in itself - militated against the whole idea of ethics, as Noel Annan has pointed out.<sup>2</sup>

Why should a man feel under a moral obligation when Nature is doing the job for him? Conscience in Stephen's ethics has become 'the utterance of the public spirit of the race, ordering us to obey the primary conditions of its welfare.' The law Do This has become Be This. Directly one substitutes the phrase You Must Do This for You Ought to Do This, ethics ceases to be ethics.

Goldwin Smith had come to a similar conclusion in the late 1850s. He devoted his first lectures as Regius Professor at Oxford to an attack on the determinism of the Comtists, not only their denial of the free will of the

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1. Jackson MSS: William Everett - Henry Jackson, March 28, 1873.

2. Noel Annan, Leslie Stephen, p.215.

individual, but their claim to assimilate the moral to the physical sciences. Deny the first, he argued, once admit that the individual makes conscious choices as to his own conduct, and by direct inference you deny the second.<sup>1</sup> In terms of ethics he came by and large to the conclusion Sidgwick was later to come to, that the utilitarian calculus was an imperfect guide to individual conduct, and would have to be supplemented by the guidance of common-sense or intuition, that a dichotomy existed between 'the natural end of action - private happiness, and the end of duty - general happiness',<sup>2</sup> in other words between self- and public interest. Man was not therefore obliged to serve society by serving himself, but to choose or ignore the obligations of a dutiful citizen. The social effect of this restitution of the doctrine of free will was of course to make social progress contingent upon the probabilities of such obligations being met, and to deprive it of any claim to be in conformity to rigid laws.<sup>3</sup> The forecasting of the future nature of society must therefore be limited to suggesting probabilities indicated by the observation of social behaviour in the past and present. 'History', wrote Smith,<sup>4</sup>

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1. Goldwin Smith, Lectures on the Study of History (1861), Lecture 1, p.26.

2. Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick, Account of the Development of his Ethical View; and Smith, op.cit., p.16.

3. Smith, op.cit., pp.18-9.

4. Smith, op.cit., p.27.

can never be a science. It is, however, fast becoming a philosophy, having for its basis the tendencies of our social nature, and for the objects of its research the correlation of events, the march of human progress in the race and in the separate nations, and the effects, good or evil, of all the various influences which from age to age have been brought to bear on the character, mind and condition of man.

Smith was not a profound thinker - 'The last of our great pamphleteers' A.V. Dicey called him<sup>1</sup> - and his younger contemporaries were less dismissive of the 'scientific' value of historical studies - yet he was representative of them in combining moral free will with a study of history as a guide to practical statecraft, 'to make University education a more direct preparation for after life.'<sup>2</sup> Adopting positivist methodology, if rejecting its ideological framework, the emphasis was placed on 'understanding' through the accumulation of facts and generalisation from them.<sup>3</sup>

I investigate, I experimentalise: I try to grasp facts more closely than has yet been attempted, and to wring out of them the general truths which they contain.... I make the utmost efforts to ascertain from contemporary evidence, what really happened; and often to spend great labour in discovering what was ready to my hand. When I have gathered in this toilsome harvest, I retire, as it were, into myself: I examine with extreme care, collate and correct the notions which I have acquired, and simply give the result.

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1. Rait, Memorials of A.V. Dicey, p.182.

2. Smith, op.cit., p.12.

3. Henry Sidgwick, 'Alexis de Tocqueville' in Macmillan's Magazine, vol.v, (November 1861), reprinted in Miscellaneous Essays and Addresses, p.369.

These quotations from de Tocqueville included by Henry Sidgwick in a review of de Tocqueville's letters published in 1861, when Sidgwick himself was only twenty-three, are typical enough of the approach of his own generation - Bryce, Dicey, J.R. Green, George Otto Trevelyan, Morley - in their works of scholarship, in fact of late nineteenth century historical scholarship in general, which was consummated in the Cambridge Modern History. Although Acton thought little of Goldwin Smith as a historian, his report to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press on his charge as editor,<sup>1</sup>

Ultimate history we cannot have in this generation; but we can dispose of conventional history, and show the point we have reached on the road from one to the other, now that all information is within reach, and every problem has become capable of solution.

relates back to Smith's inaugural of 1859, when he visualised the 'philosophy of history' referred to earlier evolving as a precipitate of the analyses of varying schools:<sup>2</sup>

This process is being now rapidly carried on through the researches of various schools of speculators on history, from the metaphysical school of Hegel to the positivist school of Comte; researches which, though they may be often, though they may be hitherto always have been made under the perverse guidance of theories more or less one-sided, crude, or fantastic, are yet finding a chemistry through their alchemy, and bringing out with their heap of dross grain after grain of sterling gold.

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1. Quoted in E.H. Carr, What is History? (1961, Penguin 1964 ed.), p.1.

2. Smith, Inaugural, p.27.

## VII

The corollary of the advance of historical studies, considered in practical terms as vocational training for future politicians and administrators, with a super-structure of 'philosophic' research erected on top of it, was the abdication of the religious dialogue. The dons of the 1860s were, as a rule, indifferent to the religious questions which had engaged the attention of their predecessors, or even themselves during their student days. A.V. Dicey 'remained a Christian but cared next than nothing for dogma',<sup>1</sup> Bryce 'was curiously exempt from metaphysical misgivings and scruples',<sup>2</sup> Leslie Stephen's position is well enough known, but he was by no means the only university man to use the Clerical Disabilities Act of 1871 to remove that white tie his contemporaries used to see as a noose round the rationalists' neck. J.R. Green and Thorold Rogers at Oxford, and John Venn and Charles Kegan Paul at Cambridge, revoked their Orders<sup>3</sup> and younger men, like F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet, who had matriculated in the 1860s with the intention of becoming clergymen, did not proceed to ordination.<sup>4</sup> In part this was a function of the laicising of the colleges, and of the growth of that liberal strength among the seniorities which would stretch the statutes as far

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1. Annan, Leslie Stephen, p.122.

2. H.A.L. Fisher, James Bryce, Viscount Bryce of Dechmont, (1927), vol.ii, p.303.

3. For Green see Leslie Stephen, Letters of J.R. Green (1903); Thorold Rogers see D.N.B.; Venn see Annan, op.cit., p.122; Kegan Paul see D.N.B., supp.ii.

4. See Melvin Richter, The Politics of Conscience: T.H. Green and his Age (1964), p.36.



as it could to accomodate potential lay fellows, but generally it indicated the displacement of interpretations of politics, philosophy and society which were rooted in transcendental values. Although J.A. Symonds could write that<sup>1</sup>

Theology penetrated our intellectual and social atmosphere. We talked theology at Breakfast parties and at wine parties, out riding and walking, in college gardens, on the river, whenever young men and their elders met together.

theology seems in fact largely to have meant religious politics. James Bryce in 1913 recollected for A.V. Dicey the six subjects which occupied his mind during his student days. With the exception of foreign nationalism and political liberalism they were all religious, but quotation will indicate the nature of the religious debate concerned:<sup>2</sup>

2. Theological questions, especially as regards the tests to which people were then subjected in the Universities, and which made the question acute for us.
4. Tractarianism and Romanism. We still heard the echoes of the 'Oxford Movement' and some of us (e.g. H. Nettleship) were much affected by Newman. To me, I confess, it was only a matter of curious enquiry.
5. Disestablishment and the relations of Church and State generally.
6. The deliverance of the University from clericalism and its popularisation.

Only one of these concerns, that of 'Tractarianism and Romanism', is 'theological' in any accepted sense, and the state of play on that question by the mid-sixties is well demonstrated in a letter to Bryce from Henry Nettleship himself:<sup>3</sup>

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1. Phyllis Grosskurth, John Addington Symonds (1964), p.55.  
 2. Bryce MSS: James Bryce - A.V. Dicey, November 14, 1913.  
 3. Bryce MSS: Henry Nettleship - James Bryce, August 20, 1865.



In what a muddle and haze we are all living - and J.H. Newman, the wretch, saw so clearly long ago that it would come to this. It is easy enough to reject Positivism as it is presented in its crass and popular form: but what in Heavens name can be made of the ordinary Protestant orthodoxy?

Nettleship goes on to analyse the various Church factions, the Biblical critics, the 'reasonable' apologists for religion as a social discipline, the evangelicals. In his critique the logic of Newman can be seen as destructive of the entire basis of religious dogmatics.

What is to be made of the belief in the immediate coming of the Son of Man?... The ordinary theology says, 'From other evidence, I know that Christ was God: therefore, these words may have a symbolical meaning.' But such reasoning puts you into a vague region at once: you first use your understanding and then give it the lie: or if you choose to submit it altogether and say the whole thing is mysterious, you are in Roman Catholic ground and must have an infallible interpreter for the Gospels: for something I must have which must speak to me and my age.... Once allow that a thing can be a matter of discussion, and it ceases, from physical or psychological causes, to be an authority. With good cause do the Catholics sneer at the human reason. When once a man is engaged in honest discussion he has admitted the possibility that he may himself be wrong: he has already assumed an authority to which that which he is endeavouring to prove must be subordinate.

Nettleship ends, 'I think a kind of poetical materialism, a sort of moral and spiritual Darwinism, might be very interesting to go in for.' In this he reflects the impact made on the universities by the debates which followed the publication of Darwin and Wallace's evolutionary studies in 1859. This was the background of several dramatic confrontations between religious orthodoxy and forces making for free enquiry, the result of which was to give an added definition

to the liberalism of the younger university men in separating it philosophically if not tactically from the programme of the broad-churchmen.

I do not intend here to go deeply into the complexities of these debates, except insofar as they impinged on the universities. There, however, their influence was important in two main respects: they seemed to demonstrate that the orthodox clericalism which opposed university reform also opposed, and would use its privileged position to suppress, the empirical method of the scientist when it saw that his conclusions did not concur with its dogmas; secondly by polarising the debate they diminished the influence of the apologists for a liberal anglicanism, and ensured that the liberal party in the universities of the 1860s would be political rather than religious in orientation.

Science and clericalism staged a collision at the 1860 meeting of the British Association in the half-finished library of the Natural History Museum at Oxford. The story is well enough known: Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, attacked the evolutionary theory in knockabout Union style:<sup>1</sup>

At first he was not bad though he showed more warmth than was at all necessary. He argued from hybrids - Egyptian mummies, etc., and talked stuff about logic, the Baconian method, etc. At last he bethought him about Huxley's words on the ape - and, with signal bad taste, turned to him and said 'I should like to ask Professor Huxley whether he would prefer to be connected on his father's, or his mother's, side with the ape.' After a few remarks more he sat down, loudly cheered, for he had of course ended with a piece of rhetoric about the supremacy of man and the mighty distinction between him and the other animals.

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1. Bryce MSS: Robinson Ellis to James Bryce, July 1, 1860.

The nature of Huxley's reply is well enough known but will, I think, bear repetition. The account I have quoted from is that of Robinson Ellis, future Professor of Latin, one of a number of young university men who attended the session, which included J.R. and T.H. Green and Henry Fawcett.<sup>1</sup>

Huxley rose, and began with Soxon's remarks on his words. 'His lordship asks me whether I would rather be connected with the ape on my father's or mother's side. I have not sufficiently considered. But I will say this - If I had to choose between an ape and a man who, dignified by high position, possess of all the gifts of Logic and Rhetoric, with great powers of swaying the passions of men - made use of these advantages simply to obstruct truth?' He went on to show that Darwin's hypothesis was not in his own opinion necessarily true - but that it did throw more light on the subject than any previous theory - and was at least worthy of consideration. I thought his speech exceedingly effective. It was the triumph of reason against Rhetoric - not so much that the Bp. of Oxford had confined himself to Rhetoric, as that he is by nature a Rhetorician and cannot get out of that style. The Bp. again replied and was again answered - and altogether got the worst of it. I came away with a strong impression in favour of the Darwin theory.

Plainly to Ellis the theory itself was not central to Huxley's appeal but the principle of freedom of enquiry, that principle Mill had eloquently defended but a year earlier in On Liberty. The Wilberforce-Huxley confrontation merely personified a conflict which had been intensifying within the universities themselves.

Affairs came to a head in the early 1860s. Reacting against the activities of the University Commissioners in the 1850s the clerics, Tractarian and evangelical, formed a defensive alliance, 'an ecclesiastical Ring' as Mark

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1. Ibid.

Pattison was later, in the slang, significantly, of American politics, to christen it.<sup>1</sup> Jowett and Stanley also felt the chill in the air:<sup>2</sup>

The two great parties which really could say 'Rise up and walk' in the last generation, hardly have any moral purpose at all. The effervescence of their spirituality has passed away, and cunning, and activity, and political tactics, have filled up the vacuum...

Jowett had written to Stanley in 1858:<sup>3</sup>

We do not wish to do anything rash or irritating to the public or the University, but we are determined not to submit to this abominable system of terrorism, which prevents the statement of the plainest facts, and makes true theology or theological education impossible.

'Terrorism' consisted in the main of using the residual prerogatives assigned to the Church in the university against the liberal anglicans. The refusal of Convocation to finance Jowett as Professor of Greek, which was maintained for ten years, from 1855 to 1865, was the most persistent of a series of engagements. The liberal counter-attack took the form of Essays and Reviews, published in 1860. That it was meant to be a provocation to the clerical party is obvious enough from Jowett's invitation to Stanley to co-operate, quoted earlier. Theologically it was more or less a restatement of the liberal anglican world-view, that a rational study of the Bible would reveal the Divine providence at work in the history of the Jews,<sup>4</sup>

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1. Pattison, 'Philosophy at Oxford' in Mind, vol.i, p.87.

2. Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, p.368. (Letter of 1863)

3. Ibid. (Letter of August 15 1858) vol.i, p.275.

4. Quoted in Geoffrey Faber, Jowett: A Portrait with Background (1957), p.245.

That Scripture, like other books, has one meaning, which is to be gathered from itself without reference to the adaptations of Fathers and Divines; and without regard to a priori notions about its nature and origin. It is to be interpreted like other books, with attention to the character of its authors, and the prevailing state of civilisation and knowledge, and with allowance for peculiarities of style and language, and modes of thought and figures of speech. Yet not without a sense that as we read there grows upon us the witness of God in the world, anticipating in a rude and primitive age the truth that was to be...

What was required was therefore the liberation of learning from the dictatorial dominion of those who imposed the interpretations of Fathers and Divines, the High Church party, and those who, from the evangelical side, insisted on scriptural literality. In such a scheme a National Church could still play a leading role in the universities, provided that, by relaxing its ordinances, it could attract a greater breadth of opinion within its ranks. It was essentially from this standpoint that the broad churchmen saw university reform.

The impact made by Essays and Reviews on its appearance was modest. It appeared in February, and in the summer proceeded into a second edition, but, according to the biographer of Stanley 'the volume had excited but little attention.'<sup>1</sup> This was changed in October, however, when the second edition was reviewed in the Westminster under the title Neo-Christianity in October. The author, 'a very clever man, but not one much known'<sup>2</sup> proved to be Frederic Harrison, then twenty-nine and a fellow of Wadham, and the

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1. R.E. Prothero, Life of Dean Stanley (1893), v.ii, p.30.

2. Sidgwick MSS: E.E. Bowen to Henry Sidgwick, October 29, 1860.

criticisms he levelled at the authors turned the book into a subject of scandal and concern in rectories and palaces throughout the land. Although Harrison's attack was launched from a Comtist position, its two central lines of attack were common to most of the university men of his generation. The first was almost straightforwardly evangelical - this 'attempt to graft the results and the principles of rationalism on the popular Christianity of the day'<sup>1</sup> would not make religion in any way rational, but simply repel the public by qualification, confusion, and indecisiveness, when it had looked for hard and fast rules of conduct and certainty of belief.<sup>2</sup>

What consolation can it be to the simple believer to be told that this inversion of his whole creed is all within the letter of the Articles, and the Liturgy, and the Scripture? All the bases of his creed are undermined; the whole external authority on which it rests is swept away; the mysterious book of truth fades into an old collection of poetry and legend; and the scheme of redemption in which he has been taught to live and die turns out to be a demoralising invention of men.

'For something I must have which will speak to me and my age...' - a scripture deprived of all authority save that which it had in common with secular philosophy had no greater validity than its rival.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, to use the Bible as an example of the Divine will embodied in history was to adopt 'the positivist conception of mankind as a colossal man possessing life, and growth, and mind'<sup>4</sup> but

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1. Frederic Harrison, 'Neo-Christianity' reprinted as 'Septem contra Fidem' in The Creed of a Layman, p.98.

2. Ibid. p.100.

3. Ibid. p.99.

4. Ibid. p.114.



then to reject the universality of history in favour of a narrow and quite arbitrary selection of the Hebrews, Rome, Greece, and Asia (Babylon and Assyria) as 'the four great educators of the human race'<sup>1</sup>. So the liberal anglican attempt to state a reasonable case for religion was denounced on both counts.

Harrison's article had two interlinked effects. In the short term it was the spark which ignited the clerical party, which formed up behind Bishop Wilberforce to hound the contributors for heresy, Jowett, Bristowe Wilson and Rowland Williams in particular suffering from its attentions. In the long term the fact that the contributors and others of the broad church persuasion had to be rescued by the younger men like Fitzjames Stephen or Harrison himself, to whom their religious views were at best a matter of indifference,<sup>2</sup> meant that the leadership of the party of free inquiry passed out of their hands. The campaign against the harrassment of the contributors to Essays and Reviews led directly to the sustained campaign of the 1860s for the abolition of the Tests.<sup>3</sup> And the leading personnel in both cases were the younger. The 'reasonable' argument, that which postulated the incorporation of all varieties of religious speculation within a church of broad and indeterminate doctrine and,

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1. Ibid. p.115.

2. Harrison op.cit., p.30: 'When the orthodox faction began to take legal proceedings, I gave time, money, and every assistance I could bring, to resist the odious persecution...' Fitzjames Stephen defended Williams and Wilson before the Court of Arches and the Privy Council. Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, p.184

3. See my Chapter 3.



within such a definition of religion, saw the universities' role as religious, found itself supplanted by the political ideal of the universities as seminaries for the leaders, and centres of inquiry into the problems, of the democratic nation. The reasonable case for religion as a means of social control maintained, however, a ghostly existence as a sort of pessimistic alternative to the politics of democratic participation. Henry Sidgwick, in a paper written for the Apostles in 1864 justified religion in utilitarian terms as 'the only real elevator...of the sensual herd',<sup>1</sup> and restated the argument again in 1886 - a significant enough date -<sup>2</sup>

I find that I grow more and more, on the one hand, to regard Christianity as indispensable and irreplaceable - looking at it from a sociological point of view - and on the other hand to find it more and more incomprehensible how anyone whom I feel to be really akin to myself in intellectual habits and culture can possibly find his religion in this singular.

Fitzjames Stephen's attitude to religion was roughly similar, and his determination to persist in its forms more resolute.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, even when the policy they advocated was under threat, the generation which had come to maturity in the 1860s found it increasingly difficult to resort to arguments which were other than strictly political in content.<sup>4</sup> In the prolonged jeremiad Bryce and Dicey together sustained from about 1906 to the end of their lives, expressing their fears about the tendencies of democracy, no remedies are

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1. Sidgwick MSS: Papers for 'Apostles'.
  2. Sidgwick MSS: Diary-letter of H. Sidgwick written for J.A. Symonds, August 27, 1886.
  3. Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, p.221.
  4. Henry Sidgwick, whose correspondence in the 1860s is largely theological in content, although sceptical in tone, is much more 'political' by the 1880s. His friends thought he might have stood for parliament towards the end of his life. (Jackson MSS: Henry Jackson, Memorandum on Henry Sidgwick, p.13).

proposed other than political ones, no recourse is had to the conservative effects of religious authority, indeed an ominous link is seen between religious revival and the spread of socialist ideas.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there can be no greater testament to the tenacity of the new interpretations than that afforded by the vocabulary of secular politics which the liberals of the 1860s persisted in using until the end.

#### VIII

To sum up: the character of the academic liberals of the 1860s - the emphasis they placed on individual conviction and responsibility, and their concern for the projection of these values into society, and for the moral health of that organism - derived from the atmosphere inculcated by the family and the home, that of the evangelical impulse. Their development was essentially the result of the interaction of this character with the institution of the university and the continuing changes in society and thought in the nation. More than any other event, the Oxford Movement both institutionalised this concern in the university, and at the same time liberated university thought from party control. When this conservative synthesis of university and society collapsed, the inevitable tendency was towards a liberal synthesis, initially in terms of a revision of religious doctrine, ultimately in terms of a thorough-going commitment to secular liberalism - freedom of inquiry combined with a conception of the universities as national seminaries.

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1. Fisher, Bryce, v.ii, p.241.

In a speech on America delivered in 1864, Richard Cobden condemned the concentration of the universities on classical antiquities. Matthew Arnold was subsequently to attack such arguments as demonstrating the antipathy of the radicals to liberal culture.<sup>1</sup> But essentially nothing Cobden said had not been said by Goldwin Smith in his Inaugural Lecture.<sup>2</sup>

To take young men destitute of knowledge about countries like that (America) and to place them in responsible positions in the government of this country...is imperilling your best interests.

amounts to pretty much the same as:<sup>3</sup>

...the great places of national education may avoid Utilitarianism till Government is in the hands of ambitious ignorance, till the Bench of Justice is filled with pettifoggers, till coarse cupidity and ignorance stand beside the sick-bed, till all the great levers of opinion are in low, uneducated hands.

And, indeed, there can be no greater indication of the relation of the liberal movement at the universities to parliamentary radicalism than Cobden's peroration:<sup>4</sup>

and I say, where you can find men who, like Professor Goldwin Smith or Professor Rogers of Oxford, have a vast knowledge of modern affairs, and who, as well as scholars, are at the same time thinkers, these are men I acknowledge to have a vast superiority over me.

The claim of the liberals to mediate between the universities and the forces of social change was thus admitted by the leaders of those forces. From this really dates the self-consciousness and the self-confidence of the university liberal movement.

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1. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p.1.

2. Richard Cobden: Speech on America delivered 23 November 1864 in John Bright and Thorold Rogers (eds.) Speeches on Questions of Public Policy (1870), v.ii, p.364.

3. Smith, Lectures on the Study of History, p. 12.

4. Cobden, op.cit., p.364.

CHAPTER 2The Institutional Structure of University Liberalism

There is little I need ask about Oxford and its little systems of luminaries.

Harrison MSS: Frederic Harrison -  
J.H. Bridges, November 11 1855.

I

I have dealt so far with the influence of the liberal movement on the university mind, the institutional development of what Pattison saw as<sup>1</sup>

the slow process of innurition of the religious brain and development of the rational faculties.

There was however a reverse process, the effect of the institutional framework on the liberal mind. The mould in which mid-century academic liberalism was cast was by no means a projection of the educational conceptions of the university's ablest intellects, but the product of the distinctive tradition and personality of the old English universities. This matrix, which reform might in due course alter, but whose physiognomy endured, left an imprint on aspects of the liberals' character which was fundamentally to influence the manner, and through this the content, of their thought. As a recent commentator has observed:<sup>2</sup>

Most of the great names usually associated with nineteenth century university reform are those of men who had trod the traditional upper-class pathway through public school and wealthy residential college, and who, despite their discontent

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1. Pattison, Memoirs, p.208.

2. Cyril Bibby: 'Thomas Henry Huxley and University Development' in Victorian Studies, v.iii, December 1958, p.98.

with the existing state of things, were so conditioned as to be incapable of a completely fresh outlook.

The purpose of this chapter will be to discover the extent of this institutional conditioning, to explore its implications for the nature of the academic liberal group and the content of its philosophy.

First, the nature of the institutional conditioning itself: this can be, I think, divided into three aspects: a sense of institutional loyalty, a consciousness of generation, and a particularly strong connection with the intellectual life of London in the period which saw this generation at its most active. While elements of all three are traceable to the general progress of liberal opinion at the universities it seems probable that the distinctive traditions of the universities and the complex dialogue of reform contributed most to their strength.

James Bryce, coming from a Scottish background, was necessarily distanced from the sort of environment mentioned by Mr. Bibby. He told Gilbert Murray that he considered the old Scottish arts course of seven compulsory subjects - Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Moral Philosophy, Natural Philosophy, Logic and English - 'the best in the country',<sup>1</sup> yet when it came to evaluating the work of universities for the nation

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1. Gilbert Murray, A Conversation with Bryce, being the James Bryce Memorial Lecture, Somerville College, Oxford, 1943, p.6.

it was Oxford and Cambridge which came most readily to his lips:<sup>1</sup>

I cannot but think of those men who came from the English Universities into public life and infused into it the spirit of the high standard they owned. These men have been an inspiration to the nation's life.

And R.B. Haldane, also from a Scottish background, but whose evangelical parents objected to the rationalism of Balliol and kept him at Edinburgh, found Bryce decidedly unsympathetic to his plans for the expansion of university education.<sup>2</sup>

The old-fashioned view was that Oxford and Cambridge could not be reproduced and ought not to be even imitated. Nothing higher than University Colleges, of the type which already to some extent existed, could be fashioned without detriment to the ideal of a University. Matthew Arnold himself had given some countenance to the restriction, and even Liberal thinkers like Bryce had to some extent followed him. The latter had, so far as my recollection serves me, originated the phrase 'Lilliputian Universities'.

If the personality of Oxford was able to impress itself so strongly on the product of a different but no less impressive University tradition, it is not remarkable that Bryce's contemporaries lived their lives in the psychological shadow, if not in the actual neighbourhood, of Oxford and Cambridge. Leslie Stephen might break loose from the ever-  
vation of Cambridge and plunge into the life-torrent of London literary society,<sup>3</sup> he might condemn his friend Fawcett's

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1. James Bryce, speech at McGill University, 1913, quoted in The Scotsman, January 23, 1922.

2. R.B. Haldane, Autobiography (1929), p.139.

3. Annan, Leslie Stephen, pp.49-50.



academic conservatism,<sup>1</sup> but in his old age he reminisced with affection of the university society of his youth.<sup>2</sup>

'I feel', wrote Henry Sidgwick to John Addington Symonds in 1888, 'that now my whole nature is beginning to sway in the direction of leaving Cambridge',<sup>3</sup> but he stayed. To the end the liberals remained in the ambit of their colleges, their academic dining clubs, their university friends, the academic politics of the day. Their loyalty transcended any educational programme and after 1886 any political differences. As octogenarians Bryce and Dicey, who had been politically opposed for upwards of thirty years, would still make demanding journeys to the Ad Eundem club dinners,<sup>4</sup> and Sir Maurice Bowra recollected the appearance of the ninety-two year old Frederic Harrison at the first Wadham feast he attended as a fellow.<sup>5</sup> When Swinburne died in 1909 Bryce wrote to Dicey that<sup>6</sup>

on the whole there doesn't seem to have been any period at Oxford that produced quite so many singular figures who have been heard of as that which began about 1850 and lasted for some ten years or so.

And, in the correspondence which passed between them during the remainder of their lives, there occur continual valedictions on their university contemporaries.

1. Stephen, Life of Fawcett, p.133. On p.75 Leslie described his friend with significant ambiguity as 'a typical Cambridge man, whether as moulded by Cambridge or as one of the class by which Cambridge has itself been moulded.'
2. Stephen, Some Early Impressions, pp. 56-63.
3. Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick, Journal - Letter to J.A. Symonds, May 31, 1888.
4. Jackson MSS: A.V. Dicey - Henry Jackson, November 8, 1917.
5. Maurice Bowra, Memories (1966), pp. 137-138.
6. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Dicey, April 27, 1909.



## II

How is this loyalty to be accounted for? The explanation is surely not difficult. Oxford and Cambridge were total experiences in a sense that no other British universities in existence at that time were. Firstly, the very towns had no existence apart from the universities ( a circumstance which otherwise apertained only in St. Andrews, where the university was small and had been for some time in decline - though its social life was in some respects analogous to that of Oxford and Cambridge once celibacy had been overthrown).<sup>1</sup> While the university at Edinburgh was simply part of a complex of literary and philosophical societies, publishers, legal and religious institutions, Oxford and Cambridge were their universities and no more.<sup>2</sup> If a gifted scholar, or at any rate someone who wasn't prepared to idle away three years in 'a pleasant hotel by the banks of the Cam'<sup>3</sup> (or the Thames) wanted to extract any benefit from either place he had to explore the potential of the university and its inhabitants, or go elsewhere. Given the generally low level of studies prevalent in the eighteenth century he probably would, like Johnson or Gibbon, do just that. But with higher standards the rule by the later nineteenth century, the peculiar organisation of Oxford and Cambridge, the hierarchy of scholarships, fellowships, lectureships and professorships,

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1. For this see Mrs. E.M. Sellar, Recollections and Impressions (1907), c.v.
  2. See A.C. Chitnis, The Edinburgh Professoriate 1790-1826 (unpublished Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1968).
  3. Sir James Stephen on Trinity Hall, quoted in J.P.C. Roach, Victorian Universities and the National Intelligentsia, Victorian Studies, vol.iv, (December 1959), p.133.

could keep him there for life, and even if he did move away the links could still be kept up by a fellowship or an honorary fellowship.<sup>1</sup> That their attachment to the universities was not the aesthetic one of Morris and later Hopkins is patent enough from the comfortably hideous villas of North Oxford and the Madingley Road. Indeed there is a certain significance in Dicey's remark to Bryce that he was entirely ignorant of the matters which had concerned Morris and his friends at Oxford, although they were his direct contemporaries.<sup>2</sup>

But where the university probably exercised most appeal was in the very tangible benefits it conferred on their status as professional men. George Brodrick, defending the prize-fellowship system from the attack of Pattison and his colleagues in the 1870s argued that non-resident fellows were in the vast majority<sup>3</sup>

earnestly and honourably employed, being very often indebted to their fellowships alone for the means of subsistence during the earlier stages of their professional careers.

The benefit conferred was not exclusively financial. In his article Brodrick had earlier statistically proved that<sup>4</sup>

all but a trifling percentage are drawn from the hard-working professional class...and not one (of a sample of Oxford fellows) is in possession of or heir to a considerable fortune.

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1. Of the ten academic contributors to the reform essays of 1867 still alive in 1900, seven - Brodrick, Dicey, Stephen, Goldwin Smith, Bryce, Newman and Harrison - were fellows or honorary fellows of their colleges.
  2. Bryce MSS: Dicey - Bryce, December 21, 1913.
  3. G.C. Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation', Contemporary Review, vol.xxiii (1875), pp.79-80.
  4. Ibid., p.79.

Such men, even if successful in public life, could only to a limited social establishment. They might have a house or flat in central London, or possibly a larger out-of-town villa like Bryce's at Forest Row, but they could not afford, nor indeed really desired, the appurtenances and responsibilities of a country estate. The university thus afforded not only an additional social centre but an acceptable register of status. It gave them entry, materially and socially, into large areas of 'respectable society' while it maintained their links with the congenial world of scholarship. Their world, therefore, preserves a decorous balance between the aristocratic salon society of the 1860s, in its last phase when Henry Adams, as son of the American ambassador, experienced it, and the bohemianism of, say, Bernard Shaw's London in the late seventies and eighties. They were committed neither to the political partisanship of the first or what they would consider the undignified Grub-Street existence of the latter. Instead they had the improving round of political, legal and intellectual society in London, conscientious travel on the Continent, and college life at Oxford and Cambridge. When we consider the vast capacity for work of Bryce or Dicey, Frederic Harrison, Henry Fawcett, George Brodrick and many of the dons who divided their lives between London and the universities, the balance was a pretty satisfactory one. Whether it was conducive to a ready understanding of the average elector's view of the political problems they took it upon themselves to analyse and pronounce upon, is another and more debatable matter.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Bryce remarked to Dicey in 1914 that German universities had more social influence than English because 'their people mixed more'. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Dicey, August 24, 1914.

## III

They were conscious of themselves as university men; they were also conscious of themselves as a particularly distinct generation of university men. I have already quoted Bryce's McGill speech and remark to Dicey apropos Swinburne, and, in my 'Introduction', from his correspondence with Sir George Otto Trevelyan.<sup>1</sup> He was not alone. This consciousness is shown in almost harrowing terms by the correspondence of the last survivors; as their numbers dwindled they wrote more and more to one another, and much of their writing was devoted to obituarising their contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> By and large the generation had died off by 1923. George Trevelyan survived another five years. His son has movingly recounted his withdrawal from the world,<sup>3</sup> and of the last, Trevelyan's Trinity contemporary and fellow-baronet Sir George Young, the Times wrote on his death in 1930 that he was 'a last and distinguished representative of a great but bygone tradition.'<sup>4</sup>

This consciousness of generation was not merely a function of ageing. It was explicit enough in the 1860s, 'the Consulship of Plancus'<sup>5</sup> as Henry Sidgwick christened the period between 1860 and 1865. A study of the group which organised the campaign against the Tests, or the writers of Essays on Reform and Questions for a Reformed Parliament, shows a very narrow age-range. All but three of the fifteen

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1. See p.5.

2. By 1919, according to G.M. Trevelyan, Bryce and G.O. Trevelyan were exchanging letters every fortnight. (G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, p.146.)

3. See Chapter 8, p. 525.

4. The Times, July 5, 1930.

5. Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick - J.A. Symonds, May 20, 1888.

academic contributors to the two volumes were born in the decade 1828-38.<sup>1</sup> Roughly the same age-range applies to the provisional committee superintending the Tests agitation.<sup>2</sup> The leader of the latter group, Charles Roundell, had to work hard to convince Gladstone of the existence of a liberal generation<sup>3</sup>

I told him that Oxford was no longer what it was - that the Act of 1854 had brought the able men to the front - that the able and liberal men were in possession of the colleges through the Fellowships... to this he warmly responded...that it was quite new to him to hear of the liberal spirit amongst the younger men.

but he didn't require to be convinced himself. In a way this consciousness was best expressed by their attitude to their seniors. With the generation which had experienced Tractarianism they seem to have had few contacts. Even their liberal precursors, unless, like Goldwin Smith, Jowett and Conington, they set out to cultivate the younger men, tended to be ignored, like Francis Newman, or disliked, like Matthew Arnold.<sup>4</sup>

Mark Pattison and E.A. Freeman were, to say the least, acquired tastes. The cynicism of the former,<sup>5</sup> and the latter's

1. See Appendix 2.

2. C.S. Roundell was born in 1827, Grant Duff in 1829, Frederic Harrison in 1831 and Charles Bowen in 1835. (See Campbell, Nationalisation, p.136.)

3. Bryce MSS: Roundell - Bryce June 24, 1865.

4. Frederic Harrison knew and respected Newman, but no-one else seems to have. (Harrison, Realities and Ideals (1908), pp.390-396.) For Arnold, see Sidgwick, 'The Prophet of Culture' in Macmillan's Magazine, vol.vii (August 1867).

5. c.f. Morley's opinion quoted by me on p.43 and Jackson MSS: Henry Jackson - Mrs. Jackson, October 30, 1912.

odd mixture of radicalism and tractarianism, tended to distance them from the younger men. For his part Freeman had little time for all but a few of his juniors. He disliked 'the young monkeys at Balliol'<sup>1</sup> largely on account of the exclusiveness of their liberalism:<sup>2</sup>

As far as I can say (sic) their liberalism consists in expecting everybody to think as they do theologically, mine consists in letting everybody think as he pleases, and being equally good friends with Cox and Stubbs.

And he predicted with a fair degree of foresight:

Twenty of thirty years hence they will be strict Conservatives, possibly orthodox bigots.

Twenty years later, Freeman's undogmatic, permissive liberalism was to keep him loyal. Of the Balliol fellows who had been the liberal majority in the college in 1865, only one remained in the party.<sup>3</sup>

The total view the younger men took of the relationship of political, ethical and religious thought found it at best difficult to appreciate such a logically untenable position.

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1. Bryce MSS: Freeman - Bryce, October 20, 1867.

2. Bryce MSS: Ditto, November 26, 1865.

3. Of nine Liberal fellows in 1865, five survived in 1886. Three of these - Jowett, Palmer and Stanley - were Unionists; on one - Newman - there is no information; Courtenay Ilbert remained Liberal. (See Poll-book for the Burgess Election (1865); 'Memorial: The Universities and Lord Hartington' in The Times, (June 27 1887) and Bryce MSS: Ilbert - Bryce, July 30, 1886 .



This is well enough shown in their attitude to the Newman brothers. John Henry they respected, because he seemed to reflect his generation's response to the problem of defining the university's role in society, conservative though that response might be. Francis's neglect at their hands - partially explicable in terms of a 'crotchety' personality (though no more so than many of his distinguished contemporaries, or, for that matter, than many of themselves) - really owed to the fact that his views were, for their time, anachronistic.<sup>1</sup> The younger liberals liked to see themselves as the product of definite advances in thought and reforms in institutions. They were thus suspicious of those who reached their position by a different route.

Their connections with their juniors were closer. F.W. Maitland was Leslie Stephen's biographer, his brother-in-law, H.A.L. Fisher, wrote Bryce's life and men from different generations collaborated fairly closely in various academic and political projects towards the end of the century:<sup>2</sup> The Ad Eundem Club (of which more later) included some of the younger men like G.M. Trevelyan, Fisher and R.R. Marrett, the anthropologist (although not enough to prevent it from folding when the older men died off).<sup>3</sup> But there was always the sense conveyed that the younger men stood in statu pupillari. A comparison of the dates of the two groups is instructive. I have noted earlier that the

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1. Harrison, Realities and Ideals, p.394.

2. Jackson MSS.: 'Memorandum on Henry Sidgwick' (1900), pp.13-14.

3. Jackson MSS.: Sir George Young - Colonel Jackson, January 19, 1922.



writers of the 1868 reform essays had a narrow age range, most of them being born between 1828 and 1838; taking academic society as a whole as it existed from the sixties through to the First World War, there seems a distinct hiatus between this generation (whose age range was somewhat wider than that of the Essays on Reform sample, birthdates being from about 1825 to 1845) and the next, effectively that of their sons, that of G.M. Trevelyan, G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Michael Sadler, H.A.L. Fisher, whose birthdates fell between 1860 and 1880. True, the interval between the two was not wholly devoid of men of ability - Bosanquet, Toynbee and Maitland were born around 1850 - but they were never a large or a self-conscious group. The memory of the consulship of Plancus still dwarfed them.

#### IV

'Are these periods mere accidents?'<sup>1</sup> asked Bryce of Dicey in 1909, surveying the age of the consulship. The purpose of this chapter is of course to answer that question. However, before we turn to this we must consider the extent to which liberal activity was not confined within the bounds of either university but came to link both to one another and to the intellectual life of the capital. Before 1850 it was possible for a don occupying a law fellowship to live off his endowment in London, but for a couple of decades after this date the lay fellow became a common feature of the political and literary world of London. When

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1. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Dicey, April 27, 1909.

Edward Spencer Beesly was considering the formation of a radical dining club in London in 1865, he wrote to Henry Crompton:<sup>1</sup>

Qualifications: liberal opinions, or rather I should hope Emancipation, my favourite term. Members at present seem likely to be almost entirely University men such as Brodrick, Bowen, and the Lushingtons, &c. but Huxley, H. Spencer, Lewes and such men might be induced to join...

And George Brodrick, one of the prospective members, inclined, a decade later, to the view that the non-resident lay fellowship gave to professional life in England the advantage of elevating it above the money-grubbing of, say, the American legal profession.<sup>2</sup> In a narrower aspect, the non-resident contingent were to be the fulcrum of the liberal campaign of the sixties, the organising centre of the Tests campaign.<sup>3</sup> So it is worth our considering why and how the 'London end' came into existence.

# V

My intention in the last few pages has been to estimate the significance to the academic liberals of what I conceive to be the three most important aspects of institutional conditioning they experienced. The result has of course been only to raise a further series of questions: Granted that the academic environment was to leave an indelible imprint, how did this come about and why in the first place

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1. Beesly MSS: E.S. Beesly - Henry Crompton, November 21, 1864 .
  2. George Charles Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation', p.82.
  3. See Campbell, Nationalisation, p.136.

was it chosen at all? Why the distinctive generation consciousness? Why the end of the universities' isolation from metropolitan culture? Examination of these three problems should, I hope, not only deepen our understanding of the process whereby liberal ideas took root at Oxford and Cambridge, but should bring into focus the relationships, social and institutional, which were to constitute the matrix of the academic liberal mind.

In the first place, why did pious and scrupulous parents, who frequently balked at the idea of a public school education for their sons<sup>1</sup> even under Dr. Arnold - send them, apparently with little hesitation, to institutions where the independence - not to say licence - of the individual undergraduate, accompanied a low level of scholarship? Sir James Stephen, as we have previously observed, left Cambridge with a very cool opinion of the place,<sup>2</sup> was concerned enough about his sons' education to remove them from Eton,<sup>3</sup> yet sent both without serious misgiving to his old university. The same could be said of the parents of the Diceys, or the mother of the Sidgwicks. The explanation of this step would seem to lie, like so many other fundamental aspects of academic liberalism, in the concerns of the Evangelical revival. The programme of the upper-class Evangelicals was to promote

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1. For Sidgwick see A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.6.  
For Dicey see Rait, Memorials, p.15.

2. See p. 84.

3. Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, p.86.

moral reformation within the existing social structure and within this programme the university had necessarily to play a major part. For even at the nadir of the reputation of the old English universities they had a definite social role - to bring young men of the ruling classes together under a common if loose discipline at the most impressionable stage of their lives. Even the reforming commissions of the 1850s remarked and applauded this aspect of university life. Those undergraduates 'belonging to the superior ranks of society'<sup>1</sup>

are entrusted to instructors of real knowledge and tried principles; they mix with a number of young men of their own age but from different ranks, and by this freedom of intercourse acquire both larger ideas and kindlier feelings; they are taught to appreciate, and so to cherish, the institutions of their country, while yet they claim for themselves, and learn to concede to others, that liberty and latitude of opinion without which neither truth can be elicited nor improvement forwarded.

Although 'liberty and latitude of opinion' would doubtless stick in the craw of a devout Evangelical, the passage gives an idea of the value the universities had to the movement, as very fertile grounds<sup>for</sup> proselytism among the future leaders of society, as well as being the essential preliminary to taking orders. Hence the activities of Simeon and his followers at Cambridge, and the hopes of the young John Henry Newman for the conversion of Oxford. By the time of the fathers of the academic liberals, the proselytic impulse had, in all but a few cases, been replaced by a prudent reformism which deemed it important to be accepted by the society which had to be reformed from within. Some parents,

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1. Report of the Royal Commission on Cambridge University, Parliamentary Papers vol.xliv (1852-3), p.28.

of a very narrow cast of mind, like the fathers of E.S. Beesly and J.H. Bridges, selected for their sons a college of unimpeachably Evangelical reputation, like the Wadham of Warden Symons,<sup>1</sup> but the majority looked for societies which recognised their educational and disciplinary responsibilities. And, due to other tendencies, by the forties they did not look in vain.

'That which man changes not for the better, time, the great innovator, changes for the worse.'  
Never was the truth of Bacon's maxim more forcibly illustrated than in the history of the University of Oxford.

Thus did Goldwin Smith pungently express his opinion of the Oxford he matriculated at in 1841:<sup>2</sup>

The colleges had absorbed the University, which had originally been free. The Statutes of the Colleges had remained unchanged from the time of their medieval founders. The Fellowships, which were originally provisions for poor students, but had by the change of circumstances become the endowments of the teaching staff, were saddled with all the preferences for birthplace, place of education, kinship, or poverty, in which the partiality of a founder, in an age little regardful of differences of intellect, had thought it harmless to indulge. Oaths were taken to observe codes of medieval discipline which neither were nor could be observed. All the evils of which Adam Smith and Turgot have spoken as attaching to endowments displayed themselves in full force. The Professorate was almost dead, few of the Professors lecturing, still fewer having a respectable audience. Worst of all, perhaps, the Heads or Fellows having been required to take Orders in the days when every scholar was a Clerk, the University and its Colleges had since the Reformation become strictly clerical, and the University, instead of being as had once been, a place of general learning, science and education, had become the citadel of ecclesiasticism and the arena of ecclesiastical dispute. Science was exiled, the ancient languages and literature alone were studied. Even mathematics

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1. Susan Liveing, John Henry Bridges, (1926), p.53.

2. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.98.

had but a slight footing at Oxford, although Newton had made them fashionable at Cambridge. The University was cut off from the majority of people of the United Kingdom by Anglican tests, and the nonconformists were despised for their lack of culture, while they were excluded from its national seats.

Smith's picture was shared by his liberal contemporaries, although it must be pointed out that, as an undergraduate of Christ Church and Magdalen, colleges far sunk in torpor, his experience of Oxford was not mitigated by the local enlightenment of college and tutor which benefited many of them. Within the generally depressing swamp-landscape were such islands of enlightenment, and the progress of the liberal cause can in some respects be likened to the linking of these together into a network of institutions at both universities which took their responsibilities seriously. Until the mid-century the progress of reform at neither university was general or uniform, and the cellular growth of liberal influence did much to determine the society and the outlook of the reformers.

The Oxford of Goldwin Smith was a considerable improvement on the Oxford of Sir William Hamilton, who had held a Snell Exhibition at Balliol from 1807 to 1810, and whose assault on Oxford in the 1830s Newman graphically described as 'the storm from the North'.<sup>1</sup> Smith's criticism only really repeats in a more muted form Hamilton's indictment: what was important was that this sort of criticism was by the 1840s coming from within the universities. In the 1800s Provost Coplestone of Oriel had taken it upon himself,

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1. Quoted in Campbell, Nationalisation, pp.13-14.



reformer though he was, to attack the Edinburgh Review's critique of Oxford out of a sort of institutional patriotism.<sup>1</sup> In similar fashion Whewell of Trinity replied to Hamilton's strictures in the 1830s.<sup>2</sup> A decade later, however, the most sustained criticism was coming from fellows and university teachers, coming in the main from a few colleges within both universities which had become the home of advanced ideas, and aided by a shift in the attitude of the university itself, as an institution, towards its functions.

At the end of the eighteenth century there had been stirrings at both universities. Written degree examinations replaced formal disputations which had long ago degenerated into meaningless ritual. Certain colleges took the trouble to reform the statutes which governed admission to the privileges of scholarships and fellowships. Balliol and Oriel at Oxford, and Trinity at Cambridge, replaced complicated and virtually unworkable systems of local and institutional preference by competitions which were uniform for all candidates. Although at worst the examinations led to mindless cramming, and fellowship reform to the creation of a class of talented repetiteurs, such reforms gave some of the more able graduates reason to maintain links with the university. Newman paid tribute to the dons who reformed the Oriel statutes as the men who made possible the defence of the University against Hamilton's attack, indeed it was within

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1. See D.N.B. article on Coplestone.

2. Tillyard, University Reform, p.40.



Oriel that the Oxford Movement germinated. But reform of this sort did not lead to the sort of institutional fidelity fondly imagined by Newman. After one of the future cardinal's more indulgent acts towards his Alma Mater's rooted conservatism, his liberal colleague Whately invited him to a dinner made up exclusively of 'the least intellectual men in Oxford... and men most fond of port.' These, he pointed out, were what Newman was defending.<sup>1</sup> The division was between the party of movement and the party of torpor. The latter did not believe that its interests were served in the least by any intellectual formulation of conservatism, and the attempt by Newman and his colleagues to do precisely this was finally defeated by what can only be described as a counter-attack of the forces of inertia. The liberals logically inherited their position, but whereas Newman had entertained some illusions as to the capacities of the ruck of clerical graduates, this indulgence was not shared by his successors. Charles Bowen and Mountstuart Grant Duff discussed this at the time of Jowett's persecution, and differed only in details in their analysis:<sup>2</sup>

Grant Duff: I really think we may win about Jowett's salary. The Country Clergy came up in such numbers to vote about that educational question that they will hardly go to the trouble and expense of coming up again.

Bowen: Won't they? They will think that education is a bad thing, but that justice is a worse, and they will come in hundreds.

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1. Newman, Apologia, p.39.

2. Cunningham, Lord Bowen, pp.40-41.

The venom of the liberals against the clerical majority amongst the graduates has been commented upon by W.R. Ward.<sup>1</sup> It was certainly one of their less attractive characteristics; looking back on the period of heresy-hunting in the early sixties, Leslie Stephen was disposed to allow that the clergy were entitled to react the way they did;<sup>2</sup> and in his review of Essays and Reviews Frederic Harrison made much the same point.<sup>3</sup> How is this division to be accounted for? The explanation seems to lie in the essentially collegiate nature of the reform movement prior to the 1850s, and in such colleges as were 'reformed' the growth of a fairly rigid distinction between the 'reading men' and the rest.

The division between 'liberal' and 'conservative' colleges is easy enough to detect, and through the use of the poll-books for the university elections it is possible to quantify the strength of the respective forces at each college with some degree of accuracy. Here an interesting difference between the two universities emerges. Until the reforms of 1882 it was customary at Cambridge for colleges to elect their fellows only from their own graduates, while at Oxford, with the exception of Corpus Christi, colleges were free to elect whom they pleased.<sup>4</sup> It is not difficult to realise why this was so. At Oxford the colleges were all

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1. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.238.

2. Stephen, Jowett in Studies of a Biographer, vol.ii, pp.133-34.

3. Harrison, 'Neo-Christianity' in The Creed of a Layman, p.100.

4. Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation', p.64; Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.106.

pretty much the same in size,<sup>1</sup> with the exception of Christ Church, which was too conservative to have expansionist designs. At Cambridge, however, Trinity and St. John's, by far the largest colleges and certainly the most radical, dwarfed by far the other foundations, which in their turn became hypersensitive to the threat of being taken over. So, while W.R. Ward can write of post-1854 Oxford that<sup>2</sup>

the opening of fellowships to competition gave new opportunities to progressive intellect, which no-one seized more eagerly than Jowett and the other successful tutors of Balliol. In the late fifties, the colonisation of other colleges by Balliol men went on apace, and with it the extension of liberal influence

at Cambridge there was still a great deal of truth in Leslie Stephen's experience:<sup>3</sup>

An Undergraduate belonged to his college exclusively. He knew of out-college men only through school friendships or meetings in the rooms of his private tutor. The University was for him a mere abstraction, except when it revealed itself as the board of examination for little-go and degree.

The result of this was that whereas in Oxford liberal opinions gradually began to pervade even the most backward colleges, until even swamps of reaction like Magdalen and St. John's had a liberal contingent among the seniority, at Cambridge in the early 1880s there could still be contrasted the 2:1

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1. Henry Jackson of Trinity, Cambridge, confessed that he was attracted by the 'tiny foundations' of Oxford. R. St. John Parry, Henry Jackson, O.M. (1926), p.184.
  2. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.210.
  3. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.75.

liberal/conservative ratio at Trinity and the 10:1 conservative/liberal ratio at Corpus Christi.<sup>1</sup> So at Cambridge the progress of the liberal cause essentially depended on action within the individual college rather than in the arena of the university, while in Oxford the university became precisely that. The reforms of the 1850s at Cambridge guaranteed a partition of interests between liberals and conservatives, and the latter retreated into the colleges they could still hold. At Oxford this security was denied them, and their reaction was predictably desperate.

In addition to, and partially resulting from, the differences between the colleges, there was the gulf which existed within college society between the 'reading men' and the 'poll-men', between those who were concerned to derive a benefit from their period at university which was assessed in educational terms, and those to whom the university was essentially a social experience and no more. There was little intercourse between the two groups. H.A.L. Fisher wrote of James Bryce's Oxford career:<sup>2</sup>

Bryce was a Trinity scholar and in addition a member of the intellectual Balliol set. For this reason, though his reputation for knowledge and ability was widely spread through the University, he had not a very large or diversified circle of acquaintance in the undergraduate world.

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1. The Poll for the Election of a Representative in Parliament for the University of Cambridge, November 1882.

2. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.45.

The significance of scholarships can be seen by the fact that forty-five out of the seventy-eight liberals quoted in the sample in Appendix 1 held them. In a backward college, where the scholars were selected through the exercise of some local or institutional preference prescribed in the original endowment, they would differ little in attainments or in ambition from the ruck of the undergraduates; in a college like post-1800 Balliol, by contrast, to sit at the scholar's table was to become a member of a select society whose connections were stronger with the fellows, selected by similar means, than with its undergraduate contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> What is distinctive about the generation of Bryce and Dicey at Oxford is the closeness of its connections with senior academics (many of whom, in any case, were only a year or so older). The abler undergraduates and the younger dons would go on reading parties together, the latter would also act as private tutors, and would still speak at Union debates and take part in undergraduate debating societies or dining clubs. The institution of organised sports, which was to lead to the growth of an 'undergraduate-consciousness' was yet in the future. The generation of future liberal academics was still informed by the tradition of 'godliness and good learning' fostered by Thomas Arnold and his disciples which posited instead an intellectual and moral elitism.<sup>2</sup> The result of this was necessarily a hierarchy in which the scholar came next to the fellow at the top. This seems to

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1. See Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, pp.57-8; H.S. Cunningham, Lord Bowen, p.34.

2. See David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning (1961), c.1

have been less common in Cambridge, one presumes because Trinity and St. Johns were so large that a young don would find sufficient of his contemporaries on the seniority along with him not to make him dependent on the society of his juniors. So at Cambridge the society of the reading men, while distinct enough, was not so closely integrated with that of its seniors. Leslie Stephen was to some extent an exception to this rule, with his deliberate adoption of 'masculinity' in the character of a 'rowing rough'. But then Leslie Stephen was not elected an Apostle.<sup>1</sup> He might not have developed into the parson in patched flannels yelling from the towpath at his crews had he been integrated into the predominantly Trinity illuminati of the Conversazione Society. His brother Fitzjames on the other hand managed not only to be an Apostle but a member of the Oxford Tugendbund as well,<sup>2</sup> an example of a phenomenon to which I will return, the tendency of the organisations of the 'reading men' to overcome not only collegiate but university boundaries.

Charles Henry Pearson, whose observations of the Victorian educational scene were usually something less than ecstatic in tone, commented of his university days<sup>3</sup>

I have no doubt, in my own mind, that the only real advantage of Oxford as I knew it was in the opportunities it gave for social intercourse.

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1. Annan, Leslie Stephen, p.28; F.W. Maitland - Henry Jackson, May 29, 1905, in C.H.S. Fifoot, ed., The Letters of Frederic William Maitland (1965), p.340.
  2. Pearson MSS.: Draft Manifests of 'Tugendbund'.
  3. W. Stebbing, ed., Memorials of Charles Henry Pearson (1900), p.74.



He entertained a very low opinion of the standard of university and college teaching, yet he did admit that, when he surveyed the number of failures among his gifted contemporaries which could be attributed to the system,<sup>1</sup>

I do not believe that any of those comparative failures would have happened at Balliol, where the tutors directed the undergraduates with supreme efficiency, and obtained almost complete obedience from all but the very fast.

To a generation of parents whose sons were experiencing the revolution in public school attitudes to responsibility and discipline associated - possibly not wholly correctly but still with a great degree of truth - with the name of Thomas Arnold, the college tutor was seen as filling the same role as the public school master, allowing for a greater degree of informality and sophistication in the relationship. This role the tutors of the 'reformed' colleges were prepared to fill, a role which the revival of studies in Greek ethics gave the personality of the classical teacher surrounded by his students, debating with and counselling them. Although they might be in retreat from religious dogma, this did not denote any lapse into easygoing tolerance as far as the enforcement of discipline and the extraction of work from undergraduates was concerned. The stories of Jowett's admonitions to his young men, not confined by any means to their university career, are legion.<sup>2</sup> But this attitude was

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1. Ibid., p.51.

2. See Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, pp.125-132.



no less strongly held by the next generation. Sometime in the mid fifties Frederic Harrison wrote to E.S. Beesly approvingly about a new Wadham colleague:<sup>1</sup>

I had a long talk with Shirley today, and am much delighted with his views. He attributes the low state of the college to the debased state in which the education of the Evangelical clergy's sons is left and the low social standard consequent upon it. He seems to be entirely devoid of the illusion of raising the place by an importation of gentlemen if he could get them and at present puts faith in the effect of a character for careful superintendence and strict moral discipline and diligence.

Finally, Oxford and Cambridge offered to parents of the professional classes the spectacle of lavish endowments going a-begging (or worse) if they were not taken up by their sons. The 'rewards of scholarship'<sup>2</sup> argument - that nonconformist graduates - however brilliant, forfeited these - was made much of by the liberals in the sixties and it is, I think, fair to assume that the same case was implicitly put forward by their parents to account for their being sent to the old universities, rather than to London, Edinburgh or abroad, provided the desiderata of efficient examination, competent collegiate discipline and counselling, and access to reasonable tuition were available. In itself the bribe of endowment would probably not have been sufficient - although the subsidised purchase of status through a scholarship would be a difficult proposition for the parents to turn down - but in conjunction with those other requirements it must have been infallibly persuasive.

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1. Harrison MSS.: Frederick Harrison - E.S. Beesly, n.d. (1854 or 1855)
  2. See for instance G.C. Brodrick (ed.) Report of Speeches on Abolition of Tests, (1866), p.4.

## VI

I have dealt at some length with the academics' consciousness of belonging to a distinct generation. Now I want to deal in more detail with the environmental and institutional causes of this consciousness, and their implications for the character of academic liberalism. For the liberals were conscious of their colleagues not merely as contemporaries whom they happened to co-operate with, but as men to whom they were bound by a network of relationships so elaborate that it endured throughout their lives, and exercised a dominant influence on the intellectual and political environment they were to create for themselves outwith the university.

Important though the personal and habitual was in this relationship, it must never be forgotten that its matrix was that central problem of the universities, progress and society which I examined in my chapter on The Liberal Intellect. This was the common denominator of university liberalism, which personal and institutional relationships could further and define but could never by themselves replace. This section will in part concern the influences of family and school on the building up of the academic liberal party, but it must be remembered that the evangelical tradition of the Wilberforce family did not prevent the secession to Rome of its younger members, nor were the injunctions of Arnold proof, in the case of Arthur Hugh Clough, against the contagion of the Movement.

It is obvious enough that a connection established by marriage in one generation between several families will give

rise to subsequent generations of children who will find themselves roughly of an age with each other. To the swarming of the evangelical directorate and its friends at the end of the eighteenth century the 'Intellectual Aristocracy' owes, more than to anything else, its astonishing ramifications. Throughout the nineteenth century its generations broke like waves. Noel Annan has drawn the pedigrees of the dynasties of Stephen, Venn, Macauley, Butler and Trevelyan, from the original regenerates of Clapham Common to Bloomsbury.<sup>1</sup> I do not wish to elaborate on his account, but to note the extent to which such family alliances served the unity of the university liberals. Within a single family, of course, different brothers could go to different colleges, or even to different universities. The Diceys illustrate the nature of such relationships. Albert, born in 1835, went to Balliol; his brother Edward, three years older, to Trinity, Cambridge. There he was a contemporary of his cousin Leslie Stephen of Trinity Hall whose brother, Fitzjames, had just left Trinity. John Venn of Caius was also a cousin, and a year younger than Albert. Somewhat older was Henry Smith, to whom the Diceys were related by marriage. Through his father Fitzjames Stephen came to know Henry Cunningham, the son of the Rev. John Cunningham, and married his sister. Cunningham was a member of the Oxford Essay Society, along with Brodrick, Arthur Butler, Goschen, Charles Stuart Parker, Pearson, W.L. Newman, Frederic Harrison and Godfrey Lushington, most

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1. 'The Intellectual Aristocracy' in Studies in Social History.

of whom could claim evangelical if not Clapham forehears. Along with Goschen, Grant Duff, Pearson and Parker, Stephen was a member of the earlier Oxford 'Tugendbund'.<sup>1</sup> The point here is that a stranger from a different environment, James Bryce for instance, could, simply through friendship with Dicey, have access to this network of acquaintanceship, and when several such friendships with their resulting patterns were imposed, one upon the other, an elaborate mesh of family connections provided a network throughout and between the two universities. Two family connections in particular were to have especial importance. Of the Sidgwick brothers two, Henry and Arthur, went to Trinity, Cambridge, and the eldest, William, to Merton, Oxford. William was instrumental in 1864 in founding the Ad Eundem Club to unite the liberals of both universities,<sup>2</sup> of which his brothers were founder-members. Vernon Lushington, the twin brother of Godfrey, went to Trinity at Cambridge, and adopted the Comtism of his brother.<sup>3</sup> He too was an early member of the Ad Eundem,<sup>4</sup> and was probably responsible for relaying to Cambridge much of the Comtist doctrine which William Everett was later to find pervasive among his contemporaries in the late fifties and early sixties.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The genealogical details here were taken from the D.N.B., Rait, Dicey, Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, C.H. Pearson, 'Memoir of H.J.S. Smith' in The Collected Mathematical Writings of H.J.S. Smith (1894), Stebbing, Pearson, and Pearson MSS.: 'Tugendbund' document, and John and J.A. Venn, ed., Alumni Cantabrigiensis (1922).
  2. Jackson MSS.: Sir George Young - Colonel Jackson, January 17, 1922.
  3. Obituary by E.S. Beesly, Positivist Review No.231 (March 1912), pp.65-6.
  4. Jackson MSS: Sir George Young - Henry Jackson, June 12, 1907.
  5. Jackson MSS.: William Everett - Henry Jackson, March 28, 1873.

Superimposed upon these family relationships were friendships made at school. I shall deal elsewhere with the educational background of the academic liberals and do not propose to anticipate myself here; certain aspects of their educational environment did, however, contribute to their later collective activities and are worth examining.

For a start, since the liberals tended to be educated at a wider range of institutions than their university contemporaries, school acquaintanceships were obviously of less importance among them.<sup>1</sup> However, of those who attended public schools, most went to those which had been subjected to the 'Arnoldian' influence and its associated reforms.<sup>2</sup> To some extent this ensured a certain ideological identity among alumni of such institutions, although this should not be overvalued. Several - Henry Sidgwick, Charles Pearson, T.H. Green - who attended Rugby, disliked it,<sup>3</sup> and were suspicious of the Arnoldian ethos. Yet what was important was that they went there, and derived from their experience the friendship of similar serious-minded young men, instead of the anonymous barbarity of the unreformed schools. Rugby provided the most important groups of future liberals. Between 1845 and 1850 Pearson, Goschen, Godfrey Lushington, J.H. Bridges, Horace Davey, Franck Bright, and T.W. Jex-Blake were cutting their liberal milk-teeth there,<sup>4</sup> and between

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1. See Appendix 1.

2. Ditto.

3. A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.9; Stebbing, Pearson, p.16; Richter, The Politics of Conscience, p.46.

4. Stebbing, Pearson, p.20.

1850 and 1855 the tradition was carried on by Sidgwick, Green, Bowen, Rutson and Robinson Ellis.<sup>1</sup> Harrow also contributed in a smaller way to this amalgam of ideology and acquaintance, Montague Butler, G.O. Trevelyan, Henry Yates Thompson, Lionel Tollemache and John Addington Symonds being contemporaries there,<sup>2</sup> and even at Eton in the mid-fifties Swinburne found congenial company in George Young.<sup>3</sup> More important was King's College, London, where parents of an evangelical disposition were wont to send their sons after, or instead of, public school. After being thrown out of Rugby Charles Pearson went there and met Fitzjames Stephen, Frederic Harrison and Edward Dicey, in an institution which, for all its religious origins, had become a nursery of advanced thought.<sup>4</sup>

So, even before any of the liberal generation actually matriculated at either university, institutional reform, family connection and school acquaintanceship had already to a great extent determined the pattern of their university career. This at a time when there was little in the way of

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1. See Cunningham, Lord Bowen, p.16.

2. Butler was actually a master by the time the other four were at Harrow. I hesitated before including Symonds. He knew Thompson because, according to Mrs. Grosskurth, he was assaulted by him but later the two became reconciled. (Phyllis Grosskurth, John Addington Symonds, p.27). He disliked Butler and Harrow equally and was to be instrumental in exposing the homosexual activities of C.J. Vaughan.

3. See D.N.B. entry on Young (1922-30 Supp.).

4. Stebbing, Pearson, p.33.



formal academic sanctions to interfere with it. The honours candidate still had no choice of subject to read for. With a common curriculum (such as it was) the inter-disciplinary divisions which propel contemporary students into entirely different surroundings, and present them with a fresh set of acquaintances, were absent. The university merely expanded a pattern of relationships family and school had created.

## VII

Earlier in this chapter I quoted Charles Pearson's sour remark to the effect that the only good thing about Oxford was that it gave the student the opportunity to educate himself through his meetings with his contemporaries. Pearson, of course, went on to admit the efficiency of instruction in the better-run colleges, yet a great deal of truth remains in his statement. If it was not for an elaborate informal system of supplementary instruction the examining system at both universities would rapidly have broken down. Private tutors, reading parties, discussion groups, the Unions, fulfilled a two-fold function in the universities at the mid-century: they were an essential, though not a formally sanctioned part of the education of the conscientious undergraduate; they also became an essential part of the tissue of the liberal movement, as, being informal, they tended to attract persons of similar intellectual tendencies.

Of these institutions, the private tutor was educationally the most ambiguous. Mark Pattison lashed him, and the examin-



ation system which sired him, in the seventies:<sup>1</sup>

What the aspirant for honours requires is a repetiteur, who knows 'the schools' and who will look over essays for him, teaching him how to collect telling language, and arrange it in a form adequate to the expected question. It soon becomes indifferent to the teacher on what subject he lectures. The process of training for the race is the commanding interest. Training, be it observed, not intellectual discipline, not training in investigation, in research, in scientific procedure, but in the art of producing a clever answer to a question on a subject of which you have no real knowledge.

Pattison was referring to Oxford, where the private tutor had declined somewhat in importance, and was more likely to be a young fellow or a recent graduate waiting on a fellowship, often a personal friend of the undergraduate.<sup>2</sup> He was never a man to measure his words, and one is rather terrified of his possible vocabulary if he chose to consider the position in Cambridge, where the functions of private tutor had become a sort of cottage industry, and frustrated dons like Thomas Hopkins and Richard Shilleto had become virtual wrangler factories. Mr. Sheldon Rothblatt, in his book The Revolution of the Dons has adduced this as possibly the central cause of the teaching reforms introduced by Henry Sidgwick, Henry Jackson, Oscar Browning, and their contemporaries in the sixties and seventies.<sup>3</sup> With good reason. The rote-learning of the coach ate into the very

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1. Mark Pattison, 'Philosophy at Oxford', p.89.

2. For the decline of private tutoring see G.C. Brodrick, Memories and Impressions (1900), p.79. A.V. Dicey was James Bryce's tutor, and Bryce also tutored (Fisher, Bryce, vol.i, p.47.). Neither conform to Pattison's stereotype.

3. Sheldon Rothblatt, The Revolution of the Dons (1968), pp.207-211.

foundations of a liberal education. Moreover it threatened to turn such dons as remained in residence into a species of crammer, drumming into his pupils the necessary formulae. Private tutoring provided one potentially beneficial service: where it was purely supplementary, it could bring young dons into contact with their more promising juniors, in an atmosphere where discussion on politics, philosophy and so forth, as well as prescribed work, was predictable; and it also concentrated men's minds on the necessity of wide-ranging institutional and curricular reform, where it threatened to supplant the personnel and subvert the values of the universities. It was significant that the academics' bogeyman of the sixties, Robert Lowe, was the nearest Oxford ever got to a private tutor on the Cambridge model, and his conception of the reformed university was simply of an examining board on the one hand, and free trade within a completely private tutorial system on the other, undergraduates being charged a market price by tutors, according to their successes in the Schools.<sup>1</sup>

The reading party was partially a development of the private tutorial at its informal best, partially a function of the growth of undergraduate assiduity and independence. Vacation tuition had formerly consisted of a few dull weeks rehearsing the examinations in some country parsonage. By the fifties, however, this utilitarian transaction had been replaced, for the reading men, by more casual, enjoyable and

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1. James Bryce, 'Robert Lowe' in Studies in Contemporary Biography (1903), p.305.

stimulating arrangements. There were roughly two sorts of reading party by then. Undergraduates would club together for a month in the highlands or in the west country or even in Germany, and sometimes take a congenial don along with them.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, a group of dons, taking holidays together, might bring along two or three of their favourite pupils. Trips of both sorts were, of course, greatly facilitated by the expansion of railway and steamer routes in the forties and fifties. On one level they tested university friendships, and if they stood up to the test, cemented them for life. The personnel of the three reading parties which met at Heidelberg in the summer of 1863, which included Bryce, Henry Nettleship, A.V. Dicey, T.H. Green, A.O. Rutson and Henry Sidgwick, are familiar enough by now, and were familiar enough for Dicey to jot down little character sketches of the main personalities which show a deep understanding of them. On Bryce, for example:<sup>2</sup>

Bryce is the life of our party. The real strength of his character lies, I think, in the happy combination of various qualities, each of which may be found separately as fully developed in other persons. Most successful at the University, he does not seem to possess extraordinary, so much as admirably balanced, talents. His papers, of which I have seen many, were not perhaps startlingly original, but they were always good and clear, and what was required for the occasion. He has, I fancy, great capacity for development. His most agreeable, and I truly believe his most valuable quality is his childlike 'life' and go. His kindness and friendship is beyond praise. He stirs us

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1. See Abbott & Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, pp.138-9; and A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.20.

2. Fisher, Bryce, vol.i, p.59.

all up, rushes about like a shepherd's dog, collects his friends, makes us meet, leads us into plans and adventures and keeps everything going. His life will, I predict, be one of great and deserved success. Most of the Oxford men of ability are deficient in spirits. Bryce, who has talents and spirits, will go much further than many of his contemporaries, even though as able as himself.

The Arcadian atmosphere of the 'long vacation pastoral' is admirably captured in Clough's Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich. Walking, climbing, flirting, and talk of religion and high politics in highland inns. The reading-parties organised by the dons were more formal, intellectually more rigorous, and had about them a faint odour of homosexual infatuation on the part of the seniors. John Conington, Professor of Latin at Oxford, was an adept at organising such excursions, and numbers of future liberals, including Brodrick, Rutson, Charles Puller and John Addington Symonds, were involved in them. T.H. Green went on five, to Keswick, Freshwater, Bideford, Coniston and Ilkley.<sup>1</sup> He met Tennyson at Freshwater, and F.D. Maurice at Ilkley, demonstrating one advantage reading parties run by dons had over those run by students. On the other hand the obsessive, though apparently innocent, interest taken by Conington in his charges did Rutson and Symonds little good. On one reading party at Whitby Symonds was moved to tell Conington of the homosexual behaviour of Vaughan at Harrow. Conington, with an alacrity which, bearing in mind his own tendencies, arouses some suspicion, set in motion a campaign of stifled scandalisation which ended in Vaughan's enforced resignation and the destruction of

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1. Green MSS.: (Balliol): Chronology compiled by Mrs. Green .

his career. The effect of this on Symonds was to intensify his own sexual problems and banish for a long time any chance he had of coming to terms with them.<sup>1</sup> But not all such reading-parties had the hothouse atmosphere of Conington's, and their effect generally was to strengthen links between students and dons, and through the dons with notabilities of literature, religion and politics outside the university.

Undergraduate discussion groups had been a feature of university life at least since Tennyson's time at Trinity:<sup>2</sup>

Where once we held debate, a band  
Of youthful friends, on mind, and art,  
And labour, and the changing mart,  
And all the framework of the land.

Quoting this, in Sketches from Cambridge, Leslie Stephen was not disposed to unqualified reverence:

...he remembers the knot of youthful philosophers who met on Saturday evenings to discuss all problems in heaven or earth...and, indeed, talked incredible nonsense on all those subjects.

And yet, he went on,

few things probably did him more good than those rambling and not very orthodox discussions. He learnt to use the tools of his trade, and if his youthful confidence led him to solve a good many problems incapable of solution, it stimulated his powers and prepared them for maturer struggles.

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1. Grosskurth, Symonds, p.35.

2. Stephen, Sketches from Cambridge, by a Don (1865), p.73.

And, on his deathbed, Henry Sidgwick recollected that<sup>1</sup>

no part of my life at Cambridge was so real to me as the Saturday evenings on which the Apostolic debates were held; and the tie of attachment to the society is the strongest corporate bond which I have known in life.

The Apostles, who, I believe, still meet, became incarnate as the Cambridge Conversazione Society in the 1830s. Early members included Tennyson, Hallam, Monckton Milnes and John Sterling. Its membership was a secret, its politics were radical, but most important its agenda was without restriction. 'Absolute candour', according to Sidgwick, 'was the only duty that the tradition of the Society enforced.'<sup>2</sup> Its foundation can be seen as a response to the Cambridge situation in the 1830s. Secrecy was mandatory as the persecution of Thirlwall for his liberal opinions was of recent memory, and its open agenda contrasted with a Union which was still restricted in its subjects for debate. Its membership was virtually exclusively drawn from Trinity, as the largest and most 'advanced' college, and 'Trinity if worthy' tended thereafter to be a virtual *congé d'élite*.<sup>3</sup>

There had been undergraduate clubs and societies before, but for the most part these had been either excuses for conviviality or had resulted from a priori party political

1. Sidgwick MSS.: Autobiographical Fragment, p.5.

2. *ibid.*, p.3.

3. Mrs. Charles Brookfield, The Cambridge Apostles (1906) pp.4-5.



commitment. A new element enters with the Apostles, that same self-confident earnestness which informed the Burschenschaften of contemporary Germany. Carlyle captured it in his life of Sterling:<sup>1</sup>

A young ardent soul looking with hope and joy into a world over-clouded to the zenith and the nadir of it by incredible uncredited traditions, solemnly sordid hypocrisies, and beggarly deliriums old and new, which latter class it was clearly the part of every noble heart to expend all its lightnings and energies in burning up without delay, which process it did not then seem to him could be very difficult or attended with much other than heroic joy or victory or of battle.

While the Apostles were the earliest and most distinguished group, they cannot be credited with being a seminal force for the procreation of other such groups. Undergraduate discussion circles were a spontaneous development of the time. They arose from the mental temper of the undergraduates, the desire among young men from an evangelical background to, as both Newmans put it, 'go further',<sup>2</sup> and they were also called into being to supplement the curriculum of university studies, especially in the fields of politics, philosophy and literature.

At Cambridge throughout the century the Apostolic succession was kept up, with a number of more or less ephemeral societies in the less privileged colleges. At Oxford, however, the process was more like a relay-race.

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1. Quoted in Campbell, Nationalisation, p.23.

2. See Chapter 1, p.27.



Societies would spring up, flourish for a few years, and perish. But, usually before they went altogether, some offshoot would blossom out under a new name. There were two reasons for this. While Cambridge experienced the first Apostles, Oxford endured the Movement. There were certain affinities between the two. Both were corporately self-conscious, and both possessed the earnestness and determination of their evangelical forebears. But the Movement could have no truck with the 'free-thinking and plain-speaking' of the Apostles. When it collapsed, the lassitude which succeeded it hampered the development of a strong liberal movement in the forties, and the institutional continuity that went with it.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the Union at Oxford (of which more later) had been allowed more rope, and by the forties was much stronger than its Cambridge counterpart; it therefore tended to become the focal point of undergraduate dialectic and liberal politics in the fifties.<sup>2</sup>

At Oxford the 'Decade' society of the 1840s, which included Matthew Arnold, Clough, Tait, Jowett, Stanley and Church, consisted mainly of young fellows of Oriel and Balliol and their friends.<sup>3</sup> It expired about 1850, and the torch seems then to have been passed to the 'Essay' Society,

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1. See Abbott & Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, p.173.

2. Christopher Hollis, The Oxford Union (1965), pp.102-3.

3. James Osborne, Arthur Hugh Clough (1919), pp.76-7.

which had as members in the six years it survived most of the younger Oxford liberals.<sup>1</sup> By 1856 it was being supplanted by the 'Old Mortality' of John Nichol and George Rankine Luke, which practically managed to comprehend all who had been excluded by the earlier society as well as its surviving members.<sup>2</sup>

The Essay Society developed out of the 'Tugendbund' or 'League of Virtue' - the name, significantly, came from the famous German liberal student group of the 1810s - founded by Charles Pearson during his time at Exeter. Its members, who included H.J.S. Smith, Grant Duff, Charles Stuart Parker, Goschen, W.H. Fremantle, and from Cambridge Fitzjames Stephen, set out in detail their aims. The document is so typical of the cast of the young liberal mind that it is worth quoting in extenso:<sup>3</sup>

As members of a Society, we are anxious to put on record the reasons which have induced us to unite together, the obligations to which we have pledged ourselves, and our general principles of action.

Our object is to impress ourselves more effectually with a sense of the duties entailed upon the educated classes by the present state of society in this country and by every means in our power to prepare ourselves for combined action, wherever it may seem likely to have any useful result. We feel that in a transitional period like the present, intermediate between an old order and a new the

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1. Stebbing, Pearson, pp.72-4; Brodrick, Memories and Impressions, p.100. See also Appendix.
  2. Fisher, Bryce, vol.i, p.49, and Minute Book of Old Mortality in Bodleian. See also Appendix 3.
  3. Pearson MSS.: 'Tugendbund' document.

formation of such a society may be of the greatest use to ourselves and to those whom we may induce to join us, if it led us to increased thought on the questions of the day, a keener sense of our own duties, and larger and more active sympathies with the interests which surround us. Especially we believe in the possibility of in this turning to good account much of that irresolute energy, and sincere though indefinite desire to do good, which no one connected with the Universities can fail to recognise as characteristic of many of our contemporaries there.

And so on. Before we dismiss this sort of thing as a priggish outpouring of immature self-confidence we should remember that out of its ten members were to emerge two Cabinet Ministers, two professors, a Governor of Madras, four M.P.s, two Deans, a Legal Member of Council, and the Assistant Secretary at the Education Department.<sup>1</sup>

But the societies existed for educational as well as vocational reasons. Although formally the Oxford course was still classical, and that of Cambridge mathematical, we know that a knowledge of modern political and economic theory, philosophy and literature was demanded by the best tutors of their ablest pupils. I have already mentioned the importance of Mill in schools and triposes;<sup>2</sup> we can turn to a specific instance and look at the academic work of T.H. Green, who was expected to write essays on 'The Effect of Commerce on the Mind of a Nation', 'The Nature and Use of Money', 'The Character and Opinions of Samuel Johnson' and 'The Character of Mahomet' as well as a relatively small number of classical

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1. The Cabinet Ministers were Goschen and Pearson (in Victoria), the professors H.J.S. Smith and Pearson, the M.P.s Grant Duff, Goschen, Pearson and Parker; the Deans G.D. Boyle (Salisbury) and W.H. Fremantle (Ripon); the Legal Member Fitzjames Stephen, and the Assistant Secretary George Miller. As a tribute to its successor, the Essay Society, Goschen can be quoted. On entering parliament in 1863 he wrote to Frederic Harrison, 'It has been a wonderful chance for me - the thing is how to keep my seat, and above all to do credit to the Essay Society and my friends.' (Harrison MSS: G. J. Goschen - Harrison, May, 1863.)
  2. See Chapter 1, p.61.

topics.<sup>1</sup> Where was he to acquire proficiency in such eclectic fields of knowledge but through his own reading and through discussion with his friends? So a club like Nichol's and Luke's 'Old Mortality' set out to study modern literature and philosophy quite methodically. Each week in term there was a meeting. This began with either the reading of a passage from an author of the chairman's choice (the chair rotated alphabetically), and every three weeks there was a paper by one of the members. Then the offering was discussed, Swinburne (naturally) on Shelley's Ode to Liberty, Dicey on 'The Aim of Punishment', which he found, to the gathering's satisfaction, to be 'the general utility of Society', Bryce on Gibbon, appropriate enough for the man who was to write the sequel to Gibbon,<sup>2</sup> Swinburne again on 'Violenzia'...

This educational element in the organisations the undergraduates created for themselves comes forward again when we consider the two most familiar, the Unions. From any study of the debates during the period the liberal party at the Universities was in germination one paradox becomes immediately evident: the Union rank and file were unregenerate reactionaries, yet the Union leadership was on the whole liberal. Generally speaking there would be an easy victory for any motion execrating the French Revolution, denying

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1. Green MSS.: T.H. Green's Balliol essay-books.

2. 'Old Mortality' minutes in Bodleian.

civil rights to minorities, and supporting the monarchy.

John Morley dared the last and spoke to a motion<sup>1</sup>

That the policy of Charles I inevitably tended to the subversion of the liberty of the country, and that his execution was a necessary step for the preservation of that liberty,

and was hammered 47 - 3 at the Oxford Union in 1858. However, between 1850 and 1865 over half the Union presidents at Oxford were avowed liberals, who included H.J.S. Smith, Pearson, Godfrey Lushington, Brodrick, Bridges, Bowen, Dicey, Rutson, Green and Bryce. Very few conservatives were much in evidence, I can only identify six in this period, and one of them, F.H. Jeune, went on record as regretting the dominance of 'liberals of the Goldwin Smith type'.<sup>2</sup> According to Mr. Christopher Hollis, the Union's most recent historian, this was due to the library facilities offered by the Society, a contention corroborated by George Brodrick, who added that the banning of students from the Bodleian and the lack of libraries in many colleges meant that these facilities were virtually essential to reading men.<sup>3</sup> A tail of active scholar-radicals therefore wagged a somnolent Tory dog. Just occasionally the dog could be induced to demonstrate its strength. In the late 1840s a young aristocrat, Edward Huguessen Knatchbull-Huguessen, rallied the Ur-Tories of the protectionist party and expelled

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1. Record of the Debates of the Oxford Union (March 8 1858).

2. Christopher Hollis, The Oxford Union, p.113.

3. *ibid*, and G.C. Brodrick, Memories and Impressions, p.93.

the liberals from the Union Committee; but by 1857 he was a Liberal M.P.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1860s Auberon Herbert tried to do the same, and founded the Canning Club to organise the Tory undergraduates in 1861. But six years later he was not only a liberal, but an extreme radical.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the liberal split in the 1880s that the Tories were able to take over, and a period of partisan mediocrity followed.<sup>3</sup>

The Canning Club was premature, but it was an indication of the way things were moving; in 1877 the liberal undergraduates systematised themselves into the Palmerston Club, a name which must have been less than welcome to the seniors who became its patrons.<sup>4</sup> The informal associations of the fifties, combining undergraduates and dons, were giving way to stratified groups. In a way this could not be avoided. Matriculations at both universities went up by fifty per cent, from around four hundred to six hundred, during the 1860s, and to eight hundred by 1880.<sup>5</sup> Dons had more to do; more undergraduates posed problems of discipline which they met by inculcating a specifically undergraduate sense of responsibility analagous to that dinned into pupils at the

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1. Hollis, op.cit., p.80; and D.N.B. Supp.I for Huguessen.

2. See S.H. Harris: Auberon Herbert: Crusader for Liberty (1943), p.84.

3. Hollis, op.cit., pp.124-5.

4. Palmerston Club membership lists in Bodleian.

5. See graph in Appendix 4.



public schools.<sup>1</sup> Team spirit and the cult of 'mens sana in corpore sano' replaced the emphasis on individual self-development and 'godliness and good learning' which had informed the university society of the forties and fifties, with its discontented dons and their eager acolytes.<sup>2</sup>

The early sixties are the watershed. In 1861 was formed the Oxford Political Economy Club which, though it included some very odd economists like Mark Pattison and John Conington, broke with the open agenda of earlier groups.<sup>3</sup> In 1864, however, the tradition of the Cambridge Apostles and the various Oxford organisations fused in the creation of the Ad Eundem dining club.

The Ad Eundem had its first dinner at Oxford in February, 1865,<sup>4</sup> although there seems to have been at least one 'dining club dinner' at Oxford in the preceding year,<sup>5</sup> probably in preparation for the Freemason's Tavern meeting in June. Although it arose out of the informal contacts which had steadily increased over the years, and specifically owed its creation to the Sidgwick brothers,<sup>6</sup> it was consciously planned as an exercise in inter-university co-operation and such relationships were then made to fit this conception.

1. Rothblatt, The Revolution of the Dons, c.7.

2. See David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, c.i.

3. O.U. Political Economy Club membership lists in Bodleian.

4. Jackson MSS.: Young - Jackson, June 12, 1907.

5. Sidgwick MSS.: Cowell - Sidgwick, April 9, 1864.

6. Jackson MSS.: Young - Colonel Jackson, January 19, 1922.

The club dined once a term, alternately at each university.<sup>1</sup>  
 Its membership of twenty was made up of ten from Oxford, ten from Cambridge, (five resident, five non-resident).<sup>2</sup> Writing in 1907 to Henry Jackson about the election of the Cambridge Public Orator, W.G. Clark, George Young recollected that:<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of him first, then of Munro, and then of Thompson (respectively Senior Tutor and Master of Trinity - C.T.H.) by Sidgwick marks the distinct carrying out of his policy, that the Club should become a representation of Cambridge as it was, and the rejection, by degrees, of what I was inclined, then, to favour, viz., that it should draw on all the nicest people who had been up with me (not that I ever went for this and I merely had it in my mind).

On the Oxford side too, some of the familiar names of Old Mortality and Essay Society days dropped out, to be replaced by senior liberals like Professors Goldwin and Henry Smith. But the core remained. According to G.M. Trevelyan,<sup>4</sup>

the 'Ad Eundem' dining club originated from (the) inter-University alliance in the cause of academic reform,

a statement which has a great deal of truth. Without the common concern such an institution would merely have been an agreeable diversion; shared political or philosophical views could have been aired in London or separately at either university, there was no pressing need to convene meetings to discuss them. But, just as politics and philosophy could not

1. *ibid.*

2. Printed list, 1865, in Sidgwick MSS.; Jackson MSS.  
 Young-Jackson, June 17, 1907 .

3. Young-Jackson, June 17, 1907 .

4. G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, p.70.

be isolated from the cause of academic reform, the Ad Eundem stood in the tradition of the informal discussion groups of both universities. A.V. Dicey, an early but not a founder-member of the club, writing to Henry Jackson in 1917, saw it as the successor of the Cambridge Apostles and the Oxford Essay Society. He added, significantly,<sup>1</sup>

There is a special reason why the keeping-up of the Ad Eundem may present special difficulties. At the time when it was formed political parties were distinct but not really very hostile. Everyone roughly knew what a 'Liberal' meant. The changes of opinion make the word hardly intelligible.

The liberalism he accepted being not membership of a party but that system of values he and his contemporaries evolved for themselves at university and were to hold throughout their lives. The Ad Eundem was a proof of the common commitment.

#### VIII

It was also, with its division of members into resident and non-resident categories, a recognition of the unique importance at this time of those academics whose loyalties were divided between the universities and a professional career, usually in London. I use 'unique' advisedly, as this relationship, although it existed earlier, did not then count for much, and after reforms had been carried through to fix time-limits of fellowships, did not count at all. The non-resident fellow, rather like the private tutor, was to the liberals at once a tactical benefit and a commentary on the magnitude of the university problem.

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1. Jackson MSS: Dicey - Jackson, November 8, 1917.

He was really a product of the semi-reformed university. While foundations were, apart from law fellows, exclusively clerical in their seniorities, fellowships were usually held by residents, and occupied for relatively limited lengths of time. Clerical fellows, knowing that a college living was bound sooner or later to fall vacant, could afford to while away a few years in Oxford or Cambridge, occupying the time with whist and port and if necessary a bare minimum of college business. Parson Woodforde, for instance, filled in the time between graduating from New College in 1763 and entering on the incumbency at Weston Longueville in 1776 by being fellow and steward of New.<sup>1</sup> Some colleges at both universities had lay fellowships for legal men, which legal men duly construed as being in aid of their London practices, and so were only seen in college at feasts or when the college was involved in litigation.<sup>2</sup> It is doubtful which group was more (or less) useful. But the reforms which opened fellowships to merit, claimed by Pattison to be 'nearly all the good that the Commission of 1854 effected',<sup>3</sup> in fact brought matters to a crisis. Able men could now get fellowships, but they could not keep them. Many still had attached to them the require-

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1. The Woodforde Diaries, 1758-1781, ed. John Beresford (1924), vol.i, pp.11-32, 178-80.

2. Trinity Hall, Cambridge, had most of its fellows at the bar. They were generally non-resident which 'doubtless gave some of them a wider outlook on affairs; but was dangerous to the collegiate life, and might make a fellowship little more than a humble but agreeable sinecure.' C.W. Crawley, 'Trinity Hall' in John Roach, ed. The City and University of Cambridge, vol.iii of the Victorian County History of Cambridgeshire, p.368.

3. Pattison, Memoirs, p.304.

ment that the fellow proceed to orders, all prescribed celibacy as a condition of tenure. Turning on both restrictions the year after he resigned his Goodbehere fellowship at Trinity Hall, Leslie Stephen indicted them with the destruction of the teaching staff of the universities:<sup>1</sup>

It would be impossible to devise a scheme of pensioning more injurious to the university; a wise system of pensions is designed to encourage a man to devote his best energies to his work: this is strictly adapted to make a man's stay unsettled and precarious, and to prevent him from devoting his mind to the real work of the place...

Some years before, and from the other side of the fence, Master Whewell of Trinity had remarked the effect:<sup>2</sup>

I am a little vexed that all the best men run away from us to study law or to teach schools so that it is difficult to get persons duly qualified to stay here and do the work of the college.

Stephen allowed that<sup>3</sup>

A few persons of special love for study may continue their stay at university

but thought that

with the increasing temptations to active life, their number tends to diminish.

1. Leslie Stephen, 'University Organisation' in Fraser's Magazine, vol.xxxii (February 1868), p.141.
2. Quoted in John Roach, Cambridge University, p.247.
3. Stephen, op.cit., p.140.

One of those who stayed was Henry Sidgwick. Although he had already begun the studies in what Cambridge chose to call the Moral Sciences which were to occupy the rest of his life, the debate on his future in the early 1860s appears to have been a close run thing:<sup>1</sup>

The only choice with me is between the Bar in London and study in Cambridge. For the Bar there are: (1) The prospect, very problematical, of attaining the position of a practical politician (for which I doubt my fitness). (2) The certainty of the precious (to me) stimulus of intellectual society. (3) The conviction that the work of that profession is vastly more improving than tuition. Against it is: (1) The chance of failure, involving the renunciation of domesticity and the adoption, weary and baffled, of the career (of literary action) which I now renounce. (2) The certainty of neglecting in professional and political engagements the deeper problems which now interest me, especially the great one of reconciling my religious instinct with my growing conviction that both individual and social morality ought to be placed on an inductive basis... (3) I ought perhaps to have mentioned a repugnance, perhaps unreasonable, to advocacy as practised in England.

Sidgwick was exceptional. If we look at the thirteen academic contributors to the 1867 reform essays<sup>2</sup> - that is, those who

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1. Sidgwick - H.G. Dakyns, August 24, 1861 in Memoir, p.68.
  2. Biographical information on the following has been gathered from: W.L. Newman, (D.N.B. Supp. 1922-1930); Thorold Rogers, (D.N.B.); Godfrey Lushington, (Who was Who, 1897-1915); Frederic Harrison, (D.N.B. Supp. 1922-1930); A.V. Dicey, (D.N.B. Supp. 1922-1930, and Rait, Dicey, p.49); James Bryce, (Fisher, Bryce, vol.i, p.62); A.O. Rutson, (Frederic Boase, Modern English Biography, 1892-1900, vol.iii, and Grosskurth, Symonds, p.102); G.C. Brodrick, (D.N.B. Supp II, Memories and Impressions, p.135); Goldwin Smith, (D.N.B. Supp.II); George Young, (D.N.B. Supp. 1922-1930); Leslie Stephen, (D.N.B. Supp.II and Maitland, Leslie Stephen, c.ix); Charles Stuart Parker, (D.N.B. Supp.II).



held fellowships - we will find only two, W.L. Newman and Thorold Rogers, still in residence. Of the remaining eleven, eight had been, or were about to be, called to the bar, although of them only three, Godfrey Lushington, Frederic Harrison and A.V. Dicey, were at that time making anything of it. Even Harrison and Dicey were probably making more money from journalistic work, and this was true to a much greater extent of Bryce and Rutson. Brodrick who had been called in 1859, had been a full-time leader-writer on The Times since 1860. Goldwin Smith was between his professorships at Oxford and Cornell, and had just inherited a patrimony of £30,000; George Young had inherited his baronetcy and estate at Cookham even earlier. Of those who had not this nominal legal association, Charles Pearson had given up his chair at King's College, London, travelled in Australia, and was lecturing part-time in Liverpool to women students; Leslie Stephen was virtually full-time as a journalist with the Pall Mall Gazette and Cornhill; and Charles Stuart Parker had just ceased to be private secretary to his relative, Edward Cardwell. Some, Smith, Stephen, Parker and to a lesser extent Harrison and Rutson, had taken a part in the running of university or college, others, Brodrick, Bryce, Dicey, Pearson, Young, and Lushington, collected their fellowships and left for London. This did not imply a crude desire to 'eat their cake and have it', as some more conservative academics were to allege;<sup>1</sup> the energy devoted to university reform by the non-residents

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1. Sidgwick MSS.: John Conington to Henry Sidgwick, August 16, 1869.

implicitly denies this; and if we look at the last six, we see that the first four were subsequently to return to university life - Brodrick as Warden of Merton, Dicey and Bryce as Law professors at Oxford and Pearson as a fellow and lecturer at Trinity, Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> They took their fellowships and left because they could not expect to base their careers on the university and, being men of modest fortune, could not hope to get a foothold in professional life without this subvention.<sup>2</sup>

Even here their course was neither straightforward nor easy. As Sidgwick's letter indicates, the bar was a necessary preliminary to a political or administrative career unless, like Parker or George Otto Trevelyan or Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, some relationship within the governing class could be invoked. Secular occupations outwith this were limited virtually to schoolteaching and possibly a chair at a Scottish university;<sup>3</sup> a medical career required a lot of application as instruction at both universities was casual in the extreme;<sup>4</sup> for the same reason careers in technology were practically ruled out, in fact a university graduate would start off with a grave disadvantage in a profession where the norm was an early apprenticeship.<sup>5</sup> Once reconciled

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1. See biographical note on p.130.

2. G.C. Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation', p.80.

3. J.P.C. Roach, 'Victorian Universities and the National Intelligentsia' in Victorian Studies, vol.iii, (December 1959) pp.136-7.

4. vide Charles Pearson's attempt to study science at Oxford in 1853 (Stebbing, Pearson, p.77).

5. See James Stuart, Reminiscences (1912), pp.155-6.

to the bar, however, the going did not get any easier.  
 'Oxford training seems to clog me as much as it helps',  
 complained Bryce,<sup>1</sup>

It is all very well to talk of high (sic)  
 education and very true in its way. But the  
 man with an attorney's intellect is the man  
 for the Bar of England while the law remains  
 as it is.

And the situation was not made any better by having as  
 rivals the pick of one's ablest contemporaries. Even future  
 leaders of the Bar like Fitzjames Stephen and Charles Bowen  
 had lean years to begin with.<sup>2</sup> They went into journalism as  
 well to enhance their income, and most of their contempor-  
 aries did the same. Leslie Stephen has described the academic  
 journalists of the fifties and sixties:<sup>3</sup>

...men, still young enough to be radiant with  
 the halo of brilliant achievements at the  
 University - and therefore, as we confidently  
 believed, about to astonish the universe at  
 large. While waiting to blaze out in the  
 political or legal world, they could turn an  
 honest penny and raise the general standard of  
 enlightenment, though shining under a bushel in  
 the anonymous state.

In part they were a product of the upsurge in periodical  
 literature in these decades, partly they contributed to it.  
 In a curious way the upsurge was analogous to the dominance  
 of discussion groups of the 'open agenda' sort at the uni-  
 versities (the personnel were frequently the same, anyway).

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1. Quoted in Fisher, James Bryce, vol.1, p.62

2. Leslie Stephen, Fitzjames Stephen, p.140; Cunningham,  
Lord Bowen, p.90.

3. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, p.114.

The old publications, the Edinburgh, Blackwoods, the Quarterly, the Westminster, had been founded on a priori party-political conviction. In one important respect the new publications owed their inception to the destruction of this sort of conviction.<sup>1</sup> Out of the attempt by Peelites journalists to make a go of the Morning Chronicle arose the Saturday Review, and, thanks to gifted editing and contributions of a very high standard, the Saturday was an impressive success. It was this substantially because the editor had full control, and the proprietor took a back seat. The proprietor was an earnest high-church Tory, Beresford Hope, the editor an uncouth Scotsman, John Douglas Cook. The Saturday's politics, however, were not strictly speaking Tory, or rather they were not of very much importance: it was the magazine's tone which Cook made count.<sup>2</sup> Cook took advantage of the convention of anonymous journalism to allow free rein to able young unknowns who were flocking up from the universities. The essence of the Saturday's tone was a bold, slashing, cynical, irreverent defence of the status quo. Leslie Stephen thought the best example of it was Robert Lowe in action against the Reform Bill of 1867,<sup>3</sup> which was a shrewd enough judgement since much of the political content of the magazine has now been seen to have come from Lowe's most convinced ally, Lord

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1. E.M. Everett, The Party of Humanity (1939), p.3.

2. M.M. Bevington, The Saturday Review, 1855-1868 (1941), p.43.

3. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, p.120.

Robert Cecil, Beresford Hope's nephew.<sup>1</sup> The university men were slotted in to write the less political parts, frivolous 'middles' and reviews.<sup>2</sup> Detest the Saturday's politics though they might, most of the London academics contributed to it at one time or another.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the fifties, however, more opportunities were available, as more publications, following the Saturday's lead of rejecting overt political commitment for an 'attitude of mind' which might not be political at all, came out, notably Macmillan's, the Cornhill, the Contemporary; and in the first half of the following decade came the Spectator of Hutton and Townsend, the London Review and the Fortnightly.<sup>4</sup> Connections were made between the editorial staffs and contributors, and between the contributors themselves in some of the journals, notably Macmillan's, the Spectator and the Fortnightly, but this was not uniform.<sup>5</sup> Delane, at The Times, 'kept his beasts in separate cages' and Brodrick, Lowe and Leonard Courtney, who were all leader-writers at the same time, knew each other only distantly,<sup>6</sup> and no-one seems to have struck

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1. See M. Pinto-Duschinsky, The Political Thought of Lord Salisbury, (1967), c.i and c.ii.

2. Maitland, Leslie Stephen, p.163.

3. Stebbing, Pearson, p.91.

4. Everett, op.cit., p.75.

5. Charles L. Graves, Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan (1910), p.214. For the Spectator see the D.N.B. articles for the two editors, Richard Holt Hutton (Supp.I) and Meredith White Townsend (Supp.II).

6. Brodrick, Memories and Impressions, p.222.

up any intimate friendship with Cecil at the Saturday office, where Leslie Stephen saw him seated grimly at his desk.<sup>1</sup>

University connections were thus not countered to any great extent by journalist relationships, indeed they were enhanced by Alexander Macmillan's acquaintanceship with both universities as their official publisher, Morley of the Fortnightly's Oxford past and Hutton's London professorship.<sup>2</sup>

This was tested when the Saturday's line in the intellectual controversies of 1860 and 1861 brought to a head the differences between the two generations of journalists who worked for it. Of the older men Goldwin Smith observed,<sup>3</sup>

It was said of us that whereas with the generation of the Reform Bill, everything had been new, everything had been true, and everything had been of the highest importance, with us nothing was new, nothing was true, and nothing was of any importance.

This was from the standpoint of a contemporary, though not one by any means in agreement. The judgement of the younger men was harsher. Charles Bowen called it<sup>4</sup>

semi-liberalism, by which I mean that dry polish of literary refinement which innate Tories put on and call it Liberalism,

and James Bryce said of one of the Saturday's leading writers, George Stovin Venables, that he<sup>5</sup>

1. Though in fact Cook organised regular breakfasts for his contributors. See Grant Duff, Notes from a Diary, vol.i, p.136.

2. See Graves, Macmillan, p.199, and, for Morley and Hutton, the D.N.B.

3. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.166.

4. Cunningham, Lord Bowen, p.94.

5. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.15.



belonged to that kind of Londoner which called itself Liberal and was Conservative, disliked sentiment, and detested Gladstone.

The break came when the Saturday pitched into the liberal clergy in general and A.P. Stanley in particular over Essays and Reviews in 1861. To a generation which took the debate on rationalism and religion seriously and regarded the liberal anglicans with sympathy if not with enthusiastic conviction this was the last straw. Six of the ablest university men who contributed - Grant Duff, Henry Cunningham, Fitzjames Stephen, Charles Bowen, George Brodrick and Charles Pearson - seceded.<sup>1</sup> They determined on publication of a liberal alternative, and Bowen wrote to Jowett about it. Jowett replied:<sup>2</sup>

...It should be Liberal in politics, yet with the aim of making liberality palatable to the educated and aristocratic; it should be liberal in religion (not in the sense of the Westminster); it should have a distinct object (like the Edinburgh in old days) which could, in fact, be the politics of ten years hence. It should attach itself to some leading politicians, Lord John, Gladstone, Sir G. Lewis, Lord Stanley.

...It should not fanatically abuse the Emperor Napoleon, John Bright, or competitive examinations, or the Evangelical clergy. It should include High Churchmen and make religion one of its leading topics; it should have no 'isms', no pretensions of superhuman virtue. Above all, it should be amusing...

The real reconciliation of classes in the world and parties in the church; the balance of foreign and English interests in Europe; the working out and application of political economy to the interests of the lower classes, are fields in which a new review might hope to do some service.

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1. Stebbing, Pearson, p.93.

2. Cunningham, Lord Bowen, p.93.

There is little in this that Bowen's friends did not allude to in the reform essays they were to collaborate on six years later. Yet Jowett certainly did not consider himself in the least a radical, merely an academic prudently concerned with the future role of his kind in society:<sup>1</sup>

...is it at all probable that we shall be allowed to remain as we are for twenty years longer, the one solitary, exclusive, unnatural Corporation...our enormous wealth without any manifest utilitarian purpose?

His letter indicates the common denominator of agreement which united the academic liberals, resident and non-resident, and which formed the basis of the campaign of the sixties to complete the process of university reform, a campaign in which the co-operation of liberal residents with politically active London-based graduates was to be of central importance.<sup>2</sup> But as Bowen's companions in the secession from the Saturday bore a remarkable resemblance to the personnel of the Oxford Essay Society,<sup>3</sup> it was not unusual that they should seek the advice of the leader of the Oxford reform movement. The university, as I have shown in this chapter, not only created a self-conscious community among its ablest alumni but, by its very inadequacies, thrust that community into the literary and political life of the capital. In my first chapter I showed how university intellectuals acquired an ideology: here I hope I have shown how a structure of relationships was created which not only enabled, but in fact required, that ideology to be activated.

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1. Geoffrey Faber, Jowett, p.197.

2. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.136, and Chapter 3.

3. See Appendix 3.

CHAPTER 3The Tests Agitation

Liberalise the national legislature and  
the national legislature will liberalise  
Oxford.

Goldwin Smith - James Bryce,  
July 7 1869.

## I

The religious tests which restricted the posts and emoluments offered by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge to their Anglican graduates were abolished by Parliament in June 1871 after a campaign which had lasted nine years. The reaction of Pusey - 'Oxford lost to the Church of England'<sup>1</sup> - typified the dismay of the traditionalists: the response of nonconformity and academic liberalism was correspondingly enthusiastic. Even after a couple of decades had passed, the Jubilee Retrospect of the Liberation Society could still commemorate the victory in glowing terms:<sup>2</sup>

There is no department of work on which  
Liberationists can look back with greater  
pleasure than that which has resulted in  
the throwing open of the doors of the  
National Universities to all classes, without  
distinction of creed.

To the younger academic liberals in particular, the 'nationalisation' of the universities and the freeing of intellectual

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1. Quoted in Mallet, The University of Oxford, vol.iii, p.332.

2. Op.cit. (1894), p.37.

activity within them from the fetters of clerical control was a major preoccupation throughout the 1860s. As G.M. Trevelyan wrote,<sup>1</sup>

They were leagued to open the Universities to all, irrespective of religion... Perhaps no more important legislative change has been made in English Institutions since the first Reform Bill than the abolition of the Church monopoly of Oxford and Cambridge, accomplished without the destruction of the Colleges themselves, or of anything else of value in the University tradition.

Interpretations of the Tests campaign have, broadly speaking, followed those which treat of the earlier movement for university reform which culminated in the reforms of the 1850s. I dealt with these at the beginning of Chapter I. For Lewis Campbell the 1871 Act was an inevitable consequence of the earlier reforms which, by strengthening the liberal forces and liberal ideology within the universities, ensured that surviving anomalies encountered increased opposition.<sup>2</sup> In Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870, Brian Simon, whose treatment of the earlier reforms argues for the predominance of external social pressures in bringing them about, does not refer to it at all, which indicates that he interprets it as totally subordinate to the earlier campaign. In two recent studies, Sheldon Rothblatt's The Revolution of the Dons and W.R. Ward's Victorian Oxford, the Tests campaign is seen as a more distinct episode, and the motivation of the

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1. G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, p.70.

2. Campbell, Nationalisation, pp.131, 137.

participants as a more complex affair: the liberal ideology Campbell saw as its propellant becomes less important. In the case of Rothblatt, the failure of the earlier reforms to produce a stable educational environment for the younger dons both inhibited internal reform and encouraged the advocacy of more sweeping measures.<sup>1</sup> For Ward the 'external' campaign against the Tests was an expedient increasingly relied on by the academic liberals as they discovered the limits of the earlier reforms and were tactically outmanoeuvred by their conservative opponents.<sup>2</sup>

It is not my intention to state an alternative interpretation to these - each makes a useful contribution to an understanding of the campaign - but to set them within the context of the broader political activity of the academics in the 1860s. Interpretations founded on a fundamental concern with institutional history, rather than with the activities of the academic liberals as a group, tend, I think, to distort our understanding of the episode. Initially, I propose to examine this distortion in each of the treatments I have so far introduced.

Taking Campbell's approach first: The Nationalisation of the Old English Universities conveys the impression that the Tests campaign was put into practice a coherent theory of the role of the liberal university in a democratic society.

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1. Rothblatt, op.cit., c.vi 'Donnishness'

2. Ward, op.cit., c.xi 'The Liberals and the Tests'.

My own position, which I hope to justify later in this chapter (p. 191), is that while such a theory can be seen in process of evolution during and after the agitation, it is difficult to see any educational identity of purpose among the academic liberals to begin with.

As for the notion of the reforms being simply a response to external pressure, this seems amply disproved by the evidence of the nonconformist participants themselves. Initiative throughout came from the universities, not from the nonconformists, although (and this qualification is important) the atmosphere in which repeal was finally carried out undoubtedly was affected by the passage of other acts directed against religious establishments, like the dis-establishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869.

The most recent and most complex interpretations - Rothblatt's and Ward's - can, I think, be faulted for their neglect of political ideology and activity among the academics. Important though university politics were, they required a basis of ideology, and, in the absence of all but the most general educational principles, that ideology was a religious-political one. Moreover, as I hope to show, a study of the campaign itself reveals that it had less internal consistency than consistency with the 'secular' politics of the activists.



## II

In this chapter I intend to make detailed comments on the three theses so far advanced, in such a way that the end product can be taken as my own view. I will start with Campbell as the representative of the interpretation current during the lifetimes of the participants and largely (if only in hindsight) shared by them. Basically, Campbell saw a tide of liberal thought sweeping up and over the ramparts of clerical privilege: the value of his interpretation was its identification of academic liberalism with its political and intellectual counterparts.<sup>1</sup> The point was made frequently enough at the time, as witness a speech by Grant Duff in the Commons in 1864,<sup>2</sup>

...hardly had they (the liberals at Oxford) begun to fill the void than the new burst of liberal opinion, which shook half the thrones of the Continent, came to scatter medieval fancies. Those who were at Oxford in those days will not readily forget the abiding change which the events of that year produced, increasing tenfold the interest in and knowledge of the Continent - its social, political, and religious modes of thought. Since February 1848, the history of opinion in Oxford is merely a branch of the general history of religious opinion in Protestant Europe.

The drawback in this interpretation was a tendency to assume a fairly straightforward consistency between institutional and political elements, which was not always the case. Test reform was seen by Campbell as a smooth continuum - agitation in 1834 and 1845, partial reform in the 1850s, abolition in 1871. The nature of academic liberalism and of its goals

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1. Campbell, Nationalisation, c.ii.

2. Mountstuart Grant Duff, speech on Tests Abolition (Oxford) Bill, 16 March 1864, in Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxiv, col.118.

changed little; it simply grew in strength until it was able successfully to manipulate a parliamentary campaign.<sup>1</sup>

The facts are otherwise. Even Campbell, when he got down to treating the campaign in greater detail, had to admit this.<sup>2</sup> The critical example is provided by the reforming commissions of the early 1850s. Here, although the academics pressed parliament for reform through nonconformists like James Heywood (whose motion on university reform was the occasion for the government's announcement of the royal commissions on April 23 1850),<sup>3</sup> they acquiesced in a settlement which gave little to their allies. Oxford liberals were in 1854 prepared to accept the continued exclusion of nonconformists from the university: the abolition of tests at matriculation and before graduation as Bachelor of Arts was only gained after a bitter attack on the Bill by Heywood and John Bright.<sup>4</sup> And the rediscovery of the provisions within the statutes of university and colleges which barred nonconformists from the higher offices was in fact the work of the future leader of the liberals, Goldwin Smith (then secretary to the Statutory Commission empowered to alter the Oxford Statutes).<sup>5</sup>

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1. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.15.

2. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.90.

3. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.cx, cols.691-6.

4. Campbell, loc. cit.; see also Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge, pp.36-7.

5. Gladstone MSS: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, June 27 1854. (B.M. Add. MSS.44303).

How do we account for this conservatism? I would like to put forward three possible reasons for it. Firstly, liberalism at the universities was still dominated by the Broad Church philosophy of F.D. Maurice and his colleagues, who believed that it was possible to assent to the formularies of the Church in a liberal spirit,<sup>1</sup> and that the institution of the National Church itself had spiritual and social advantages which made such assent worthwhile.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the political views of the leading university reformers were themselves moderate, inclined to collaboration with the ruling Whig-Peelite alliance.<sup>3</sup> In 1861 Cambridge, traditionally placid, elected as Chancellor the Whig Duke of Devonshire to succeed the moderate, conscientious, Prince Consort; and the difference anyway between a Cambridge liberal like Adam Sedgwick and a Cambridge conservative like William Whewell was one of degree rather than basic attitude.<sup>4</sup> Even at Oxford, where partisan feeling ran higher, liberals like Goldwin Smith were still willing to collaborate with Gladstone - a Tractarian and a Peelite - largely on grounds of political agreement.<sup>5</sup> The work of the Statutory Commission of 1854-1859 was a testament to this collaboration. Thirdly, although they had tactical contacts with nonconformity, their knowledge of its organisation and consciousness was still limited.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, p.65.

2. See Duncan Forbes, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History, p.102.

3. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.201.

4. See Leslie Stephen, 'William Whewell' in D.N.B., vol.xx, pp.1369, 1371; and also Some Early Impressions, p.33.

5. Gladstone MSS: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, May 2 1855. (A letter attempting to interest Gladstone in a Peelite-oriented newspaper proposed by Goldwin Smith and his friends.) (B.M. Add. MSS.44303.)

6. See, for instance, Bryce's discovery of Lancashire society in the mid 1860s. (Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, May 22, 1865.)

## III

I have treated in greater detail in Chapter 2 the reforms which emerged from this collaboration in the 1850s - the throwing open to competition of the college emoluments, the creation of new chairs, the drafting of new examination statutes and, by parliamentary enactment, the admission of nonconformists to degrees (but not to Senate or fellowships) at Cambridge, and to the university and colleges (but not to degrees) at Oxford.<sup>1</sup> Such reforms were by and large common to both universities, as were certain of the developments permitted by the new situation. But there were also significant differences which gave rise to the politics - as distinct from the ideology - of the subsequent liberal campaign (which W.R. Ward has so expertly dissected in the case of Oxford). First of all I would like to concentrate on the common factor of ideological change since this, as much as university politics, was to contribute to the campaign of the 1860s, then I want to link this to the course of the 'internal' pressures for reform to explain the way the campaign developed.

In Chapter 1 I dealt with the changes in the ideology of the universities over this period, the breakdown of the Broad Church compromise under the pressure of its own inconsistencies and the growth of utilitarian rationalism. This had the effect of destroying the premises on which some

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1. Appendix 6 contains details of the Tests still in force at both universities between the reforms of the 1850s and 1871.

of the younger dons had assented to the formularies of the Church of England on taking up their fellowships. For some these had become a meaningless legal formula, for others, like Henry Sidgwick and Leslie Stephen, a matter of moral disquiet.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover the political compromise with moderate liberalism was breaking up under the pressure of utilitarian - or more particularly Millite - political ideology, sympathy with foreign liberal movements, and most significantly the impact of the American Civil War on British politics. I have argued, in Chapter 4, that this led to a rejection, by certain of the most influential university reformers, of the social values which had underlain the earlier reforms. They had therefore to determine a new social alignment for the universities. Out of this, and through political activity in other fields, came greater contact with nonconformist leaders which must have brought home to the liberal academics their anomalous position, as well as giving them possible allies in remedying it.

All of these contributed to the breaking-down of the compromise of the 1850s, but certain institutional pressures supplemented them. I dealt with certain of these in Chapter 2: there were the clerical restrictions on fellowships -

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1. See Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, p.97; A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.196; James Bryce, 'University Tests' North British Review (March 1865), vol.lxxxiii, p.117.

130 at Oxford, 30 at Cambridge still carried an obligation to proceed to orders<sup>1</sup> - the requirement of celibacy, the absence of academic career structures and opportunities which would keep a fellow at Oxford or Cambridge. But these, I would argue, remained peripheral to the main agitation throughout the 1860s. The agitation against celibacy played a part early on at Cambridge, then seems to have dropped into the background;<sup>2</sup> the government successfully resisted an attack on clerical fellowships in 1871;<sup>3</sup> and, as I hope to show, new thinking on the means and ends of academic life paralleled rather than preceded the Tests agitation.

But if the institutional working out of the changes imposed by the commissions of the 1850s didn't supply the principal motive power of the Tests agitation, it brought matters to a head. The crisis took a different form in each university. In Cambridge the consequence of admitting non-conformists to degrees but not to the emoluments of the university and the colleges was early made apparent when, in 1860 and 1861, a nonconformist was Senior Wrangler. Neither graduate could proceed to a fellowship, yet the situation, far from being exceptional, looked as if it might become the rule. Nonconformist undergraduates tended to come up the hard way, by open scholarships (the work of the reforms of the 1850s) from the grammar schools, a process

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1. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.246.

2. Ibid., p.110.

3. Ibid., p.246.

which weeded out all but the very best.<sup>1</sup> (In the next thirty years they were to produce eighteen Senior Wranglers.)<sup>2</sup> Not only did this situation seem patently unfair to the nonconformists themselves, it also produced intense heart-searching among fellows like Henry Sidgwick who had made the necessary declarations in a conventional sense, or in obedience to religious principles which they felt they could no longer hold.<sup>3</sup>

Added to this there was growing pressure for college reform, as abler fellows were elected under the new statutes introduced under the aegis of the Statutory Commission in the late 1850s. (In Chapter 2 I noted the effect on the process of reform at Cambridge of the extremes of size reached by the colleges.) But the pace of reform was slow. At Trinity, the largest college and the centre of liberal activity, the college meeting at which statutes could be altered took place only once a year. A motion for alteration had to be tabled a year in advance, at the previous meeting.<sup>4</sup> Success was problematic, and failure could be dispiriting, so it's not surprising that if opportunities arose in the interval, reform-minded fellows would be tempted to throw their hand in and get out. In the various contributions to the literature of the reform movement he made in the 1860s, Leslie Stephen, whose religious doubts drove him from

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1. See G.C. Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation' in The Contemporary Review (June 1875), vol.xxvi, p.64.

2. Liberation Society, Jubilee Retrospect, p.38.

3. A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.196.

4. See Jackson MSS: 'Memorandum on Henry Sidgwick' (1901), pp.5-6.



Cambridge in 1865 and from his fellowship at Trinity Hall in 1867, found little cause for hope in the progress of internal reform at Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> And, gloomy though his tone was, none of his contemporaries disagreed with him.<sup>2</sup>

College reform was also under way at Oxford, although it never had the importance it had at Cambridge because all the colleges were much smaller than the two Cambridge giants, Trinity and St. John's, and the overall gain in the reform of a single college that much less (see Chapter 2). However, because of the 'open' nature of the fellowship competitions, graduates from the 'reformed' colleges were gradually taking over the conservative ones. 'In the later fifties', writes W.R. Ward,<sup>3</sup>

the colonisation of other colleges by Balliol men went on apace, and with it went the extension of liberal influence.

The truth of this can be confirmed by a glance at Appendix 5, which gives the collegiate background of the academics who attended the Freemason's Tavern meeting in June 1864. In the revision of its statutes, All Souls stood out for a time against the Statutory Commission's injunction to elect fellows on intellectual quality alone. It was taken to court by three of its younger, liberal-minded fellows - W.H. Fremantle,

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1. Leslie Stephen, 'University Organisation' in Fraser's Magazine (February 1868) vol.lxxvii, p.153.

2. See Sidgwick MSS: H. Brandreth - Henry Sidgwick, October 21 1867; Henry Sidgwick - his mother, November 13 1867. 'Don't be afraid, we have a fine old Conservative constitution which will resist many shocks of feeble individuals like myself.'

3. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.210.

A.G. Watson and Godfrey Lushington - and lost in 1864.<sup>1</sup> The Cathedral Canons of Christ Church, too, fought hard to retain the power of 'the most conservative governing body in Oxford',<sup>2</sup> after 1855 against their own Dean, A.G. Liddell, an appointee of the Whig government, but eventually, in 1867, they succumbed as well.

However, this process of reform took place against, and was frequently frustrated by, violent politico-religious controversy. Henry Sidgwick found it (at first glance, and from the safety of Cambridge) appealing,<sup>3</sup>

I wish I was at Oxford, they are always having exciting controversies which keep them alive. Nothing is so fertile as a good semi-theological row. Just now Jowett and his foes divide the attention of the common rooms with Mansel and Goldwin Smith. I have just read Goldwin Smith's Rational Religion. It seems smashing, but he loses by being over-controversial. There should be at least an affectation of fairness in a damaging attack of the kind.

The manoeuvrings, attacks and defences of the various Oxford parties at this period have been dealt with in great detail by W.R. Ward in Victorian Oxford. There is little I can add factually to his account, but the outlines of the main engagements can bear repetition, while the context in which I see them may lead to a certain amount of re-interpretation.

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1. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.211.

2. Ibid., p.212; see also E.G.W. Bill and J.F.A. Mason, Christ Church and Reform (1967).

3. ~~Sidgwick MSS.~~ Henry Sidgwick - E.M. Young, July 28, 1858

In the aftermath of the Movement, the Oxford environment was conducive to the growth of violent theological controversy, and violent theological controversy it got. In Chapter 1 I dealt with the circumstances surrounding the Essays and Reviews fracas and don't propose to repeat myself. However, this much we can take from it: the reaction of the conservative academics was not purely one of theological outrage. It was the reaction of men desperately fighting to retain the university for an ideal of education to which some of them at any rate were deeply committed, against intellectual tendencies which were gaining ground within it through the government's sponsorship of reform.<sup>1</sup> And, if the liberals were gaining in the colleges, and through the patronage of the steady succession of Whig and Liberal governments after 1850, their Oxford position was vulnerable in several respects, and the conservatives did not hesitate to take advantage of these.

In the first place, while the Tests were enforced, liberal dons at Oxford were subject to the same moral qualms as their Cambridge colleagues, with the significant difference that while in Cambridge 'a man may on the whole speak the thing he will',<sup>2</sup> in Oxford the conservative party was prepared to make free with the charge of heresy or at least bad faith. This view was shared by some who were in other respects close to the younger men. John Conington, whose idiosyncratic

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1. Gladstone MSS: H.B. Liddon - Gladstone, March 16, 1864, (B.M. Add. MSS: 44237).

2. A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.106.

reversion to evangelicalism earned him the hatred of Mark Pattison,<sup>1</sup> wrote to Henry Sidgwick on the latter's resignation of his Trinity fellowship,<sup>2</sup>

I do not know anything which more alienated me from the University Liberals than their determination to 'eat their cake and have it', to combine the advantages of an orthodox profession with those of free thought and speech.

And James Bryce's Ulster presbyterian uncle, Reuben John Bryce, was similarly severe on his nephew's associates,<sup>3</sup>

I know it's very hard to denounce publicly the errors of those we have a personal regard for. Yet in fact these men are the supports of the system. If Goschen could have said that a score of men, instead of only one man, are about to give up their fellowships rather than sign a lie, the system would immediately fall. Every man who refuses to be a martyr is a traitor, but it is very hard to say so or think so of a good-natured, warm-hearted, genial fellow whose conversation over a glass of wine or a cup of coffee one enjoys immensely, and who, in every other department of his life, seems an honourable and high-principled man.

While the Tests, and the religious situation they represented, remained, the academic liberals' situation could never be a logically tenable or an honourable one.

Further, the conservatives realised, after the setbacks of the 1850s, that the new compromise gave them ample opportunity to counterattack. As far as the government of the

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1. Mark Pattison, Memoirs, p.249.

2. Sidgwick MSS: John Conington - Henry Sidgwick, August 16, 1869 .

3. Bryce MSS: Reuben John Bryce - James Bryce, June 26, 1865 .

university was concerned, the Oxford act of 1854 (the equivalent Cambridge measure came two years later) replaced the Heads of Houses as the controlling body of the university by a Council consisting of the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, two Proctors, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, eighteen members of Congregation, six professors and six members of Convocation.<sup>1</sup> Although the Liberals had only the slimmest of chances of getting a majority on this body, through the Congregation and professorial members, they believed that the creation of Congregation - a body composed of resident M.A.s which could vet the decisions of Council - might produce a liberal majority.<sup>2</sup> However, it soon became apparent that Congregation was not a liberal body. During the parliamentary debates on the Oxford Bill its composition had been expanded, at Gladstone's insistence, from being purely composed of university men to include M.A.s resident in the town.<sup>3</sup> With the growth of clerical support for the High Church the number of such clergy increased,<sup>4</sup> and their support went, for the most part, to the conservative party,<sup>5</sup>

labouring, under perfect discipline, and with fell unity of purpose, to hold the University in subjection, and fill her government with its nominees.

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1. Mallet, The University of Oxford, vol.iii, p.326.

2. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.193.

3. Ibid., p.200.

4. Goldwin Smith, The Elections to the Hebdomadal Council (1866), p.6.

5. Smith, op.cit., p.3.

Moreover, from about 1859 on, the clerical conservatives began to organise themselves on lines which were explicitly and functionally political.<sup>1</sup> The conservatives put forward a 'slate' of candidates for election to Council, for all of whom the conservative M.A. was supposed to vote.<sup>2</sup> (In this way the vocabulary of American democracy entered university politics at Oxford, with much talk of 'tickets', 'rings' and 'gangs' - just at the time when its more inspiring aspects were engrossing the younger liberals.)<sup>3</sup>

These measures took effect rapidly. From 1860 on the liberals lost badly in the elections for Council, which defied Congregation by taking decisions on University policy without consultation.<sup>4</sup> Congregation itself conservatised. Although in 1864 it passed new examination statutes which The Times saw as 'the triumph of radical liberalism',<sup>5</sup> the liberals were thereafter weak in it.<sup>6</sup> Convocation never figured much in the liberals' calculations, despite its ultimate authority in matters of finance and legislation.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ward, op.cit., p.229.

2. Goldwin Smith, op.cit., p.6.

3. See Mark Pattison, 'Philosophy at Oxford', p.82.

4. Gladstone MSS: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, October 25, 1860. (B.M. Add. MSS: 44303).

5. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.223.

6. Ibid., p.235.

7. Mallet, op.cit., vol.iii, p.303.

They had always been swamped by the country clergy, and were now placed at an added disadvantage since more of them could be brought up to Oxford by train to vote down liberal measures.<sup>1</sup>

This was the situation from which the academic liberals, more or less in desperation, turned to external political agitation. They wanted a measure which, by abolishing the religious tests, would effectively secularise the university. Such is Dr. Ward's view, and I see no reason to disagree with it, as far as it goes. Behind the declarations of solidarity between Oxford and Manchester academics later got into the habit of making there was always a strong element of calculation. With Cambridge the initial impulse was more disinterested, but as time went on the problem of the Tests and the nonconformist conscience became supplemented by the opportunity of harnessing the nonconformist vote to the lagging cause of university reform.

However, I believe it would be wrong to see the academics' alliance with nonconformity purely in tactical terms. The fact that it endured amicably for eight difficult years, uniting two disparate groups and maintaining this unity against several powerful challenges, indicates an identity of interest which subsisted on more than one level. In the next section I propose to examine the nature of the alliance, the challenges it faced, and its response, in the critical first two years of the campaign.

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1. H.S. Cunningham, Lord Bowen, p.40.



## IV

The first act in the parliamentary campaign was the presentation by Edward Pleydell-Bouverie, Liberal M.P. for Kilmarnock, of a petition signed by seventy-four resident fellows and tutors at Cambridge on June 13 1862. This prayed for the abolition of the assent to the Act of Uniformity on election to a fellowship,<sup>1</sup> a test unique to Cambridge (at Oxford there was no need to exact such a test, as all fellows save one had to be M.A.s and as such, had to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles).<sup>2</sup> The petition was the work of Henry Fawcett, subsequently to become one of the most energetic of the Cambridge campaigners, who had, four years earlier, before his blinding, agitated for the abolition of celibacy obligations on the part of fellows.<sup>3</sup> The following session, on May 5 1863, Bouverie introduced a bill to carry out the terms of the petition.<sup>4</sup> He withdrew the bill on June 24 because the lateness of the session would not permit its passage, but promised to reintroduce it in 1864.<sup>5</sup>

The debates on the bill, in themselves favourable to it (it was carried, on introduction, by 157-135)<sup>6</sup> were accompanied by petitions against it from the Cambridge Senate,<sup>7</sup>

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1. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge, p.44.

2. See Appendix 6.

3. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.110.

4. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxx, cols.1228-1231.

5. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxi, cols. 1385-1387.

6. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxx, col.1240.

7. Winstanley, op.cit., p.46.

and, rather belatedly, by a petition in its favour from the Oxford liberals,<sup>1</sup> and, in the next session, a bill was introduced on their behalf.<sup>2</sup> The Oxford Bill was in the hands of John George Dodson, Liberal M.P. for East Sussex. It aimed to repeal the test governing the Oxford M.A. degree.<sup>3</sup> Although in the first instance a measure aimed at the university rather than the colleges, it would incidentally open such college fellowships as were only restricted by the obligation to proceed M.A., but not those covered by declarations required by colleges on the authority of their statutes.<sup>4</sup>

The Oxford Bill was introduced on February 12, and given its second reading on March 16.<sup>5</sup> After an adjourned debate it went into Committee on May 1.<sup>6</sup> On May 8 Bouverie was given leave to introduce his bill,<sup>7</sup> and measures to abolish tests in both universities lay before the House, as they were to do, in various shapes and combinations, for the next seven years.

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1. Speech of George Joachim Goschen, in Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxi, col.1394.

2. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.134.

3. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.134.

4. See Appendix 6.

5. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxiii, col.543.

6. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxiv, col.102.

7. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxv, col.1383.

Now at this stage I want to look in some detail at certain of the critical factors which influenced the course of the campaign while it remained a parliamentary 'hardy annual'. These factors could alter in a marginal way, but they were to remain important throughout.

The first and most obvious requirement of a successful parliamentary campaign was a majority in the Commons.<sup>1</sup> Even so, this by itself was not sufficient. The majority had to be large enough, and sustain itself sufficiently, to take the bill through its four Commons stages - Introduction, Second Reading, Committee and Third Reading. At Second Reading it had to be sufficiently emphatic in its decision to ensure that the Committee on the Bill significantly reflected its opinion. It had also to be sufficiently enthusiastic about the matter on hand to advance it to the head of its business, so that, at a period when the parliamentary session lasted only from February to early August, it would not fail through lack of time. Finally, it had to be strong enough to withstand amendments from the House of Lords. In fact, unless a bill was reasonably non-controversial - which most humanitarian measures of the sort successfully then carried by private members were - it had little chance of success unless it became a government measure.<sup>2</sup> And although the abolition of the university tests managed to get majorities in its favour, these were by no means convincing ones.

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1. I am indebted to my friend, Mr. George Cubie, Assistant Clerk to the House of Commons, for information about nineteenth century parliamentary procedure.

2. Gladstone MSS: J.D. Coleridge - Gladstone, December 17 1868. (B.M. Add. MSS: 44138)

What was the nature of the opposition? An analysis of the voting on the third reading of Dodson's bill in 1864 discloses that it was more than 95% Conservative.<sup>1</sup> The attitude to the bill of the Conservative leadership was emphatically one determined by political tactics. Certain Conservative churchmen were undoubtedly sincere in their opposition - men like J.W. Henley, the member for Oxfordshire, and Charles Newdegate, the member for North Warwickshire and the university burgesses - who set themselves up as the guardians of 'the Church in Danger'.<sup>2</sup> But, despite their success in 1864, when energetic whipping-up narrowly defeated the third reading,<sup>3</sup> the Conservative leadership was not prepared to make an issue of the matter, and throw the rank and file regularly against it, reckoning, doubtless, that the measure was embarrassing enough to the Liberals without any help from them.<sup>4</sup> Even the position of the man who was to become the most vehement partisan of the lot, Lord Robert Cecil, was fundamentally one dictated by calculation. Cecil's own intellectual position was not totally at variance with the academics: in his Saturday Review articles he had attacked the clerical persecutors of

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1. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxvi, cols.678-9.

2. A fairly typical speech by a member of this group would be that of Sir William Heathcote, M.P. for Oxford University on the second reading of Dodson's bill, March 16, 1864. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxiv, cols.116-7.

3. James Bryce, 'University Tests', p.132.

4. Lord Ripon, who managed the Bill in the Lords in 1870, thought Salisbury's opposition had 'a flavour of Dizzyism' (Lucien Wolf, The Life of Lord Ripon (1921), vol.i, p.227.)

Colenso,<sup>1</sup> but he was prepared to embarrass the Liberals for as long as he could. His speech on the introduction of Bouverie's bill in 1863 demonstrates both his technique and a plausible reason why no person of liberal mind in academic life would dare flirt with political Conservatism:<sup>2</sup>

Fellowships really gave those who held them the power of regulating the studies of the Universities, and therefore the measure was practically a measure for transferring the control over the studies and religious education of the Church of England to the Nonconformists.

But the difficulty was that, unfortunately, the people of England were not as enlightened as the noble lord and the rt. hon. gentleman. What he was afraid of was, that if there was a Unitarian or a Jew Vice-Chancellor, or if there was any distinguished teacher in the University who occupied the position of the celebrated Professor at Leyden, the fathers of families throughout the United Kingdom would as soon cut off their right hands as send their children to the Universities. If it was intended to pass a measure which would prevent the Universities from being, what they had heretofore been, the favourite resorts of the upper and middle classes of England, justice required that they should heed the Universities themselves.

The nature of the Conservatives' tactics becomes relevant when we consider the attitude of the Liberal governments of the period. In 1864 Lord Palmerston was still premier, and his conservatism permeated the administration. 'That we are in the midst of a conservative reaction,' wrote Goldwin Smith,<sup>3</sup>

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1. M. Pinto-Duschinsky, The Political Thought of Lord Salisbury (1967), p.71.

2. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxx, cols.1239-1240.

3. Goldwin Smith, A Plea for the Abolition of Tests (1864), pp.96-100.

is unquestionable.... And this reaction has produced a government having a not very remote analogy to the governments of the great reaction in the time of Charles II, and sustaining itself to a great extent by analogous means.... It happens, moreover, that the popular party in this country is at the present moment under the guidance of an isolated group of aristocratic leaders, whose original connection with it was merely accidental, whose objects and convictions were, in most cases, exhausted when they had carried the Reform Bill, and put an end to their own exclusion from power.

Palmerston had backed the reforms of the 1850s,<sup>1</sup> and in 1863 went as far as voting for the introduction of Bouverie's bill, though expressly without committing himself to vote for it at any later stage.<sup>2</sup> However, the government's attitude was expressed through the Chancellor of the Exchequer, W.E. Gladstone, who, as sitting member for Oxford University and repository of the trust of the High Church party, could not be expected to be sympathetic.<sup>3</sup> There were, admittedly, members of the Cabinet who were personally sympathetic to university reform, notably Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary, but Gladstone had the confidence of the Cabinet as a whole. In the debates of 1864, he was arbiter of the situation.

V

Gladstone got wind of the Oxford petition in 1863 in a letter from his friend Henry Wentworth Acland, Professor of

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1. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.cxii, col.1523 (division at end of debate on July 18, 1850).
  2. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxx, col.1240.
  3. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.133.

Medicine, who had himself refused to sign.<sup>1</sup> Gladstone replied, commending his decision:<sup>2</sup>

I am confident you have done right in declining to sign this petition: and I am struck by (what seems to me) the gross impolicy of such a demand at such a moment by those who will, at any rate for the time, be chiefly regarded as the friends of Mr. Jowett.

However, his subsequent observations took a different direction:<sup>3</sup>

As to the general gloominess of the situation for the Church of England and for Oxford its eldest daughter, I think it is too soon to determine whether the very menacing symptoms of the present day and the rapid march on the citadel, are transitory phenomena, analogous to what have before appeared, or the signs of a change profound and permanent, or in what degree they are part of either character. I am most alarmed at the weakness of what ought to be the defending force: the general want of study and learning, with few exceptions, in the Church.

And his final position, if ambiguous, was by no means hostile to change:<sup>4</sup>

This would, with me, depend very much 1. upon what was to be substituted. 2. upon the likelihood of a conciliatory effect at the time. 3. upon the prospect of getting a firmer or a more shifting standing ground.

I do not think with respect to this question of Tests in the University that the prospect of ulterior dangers is conclusive against concession of any kind. But I am sure that it is right not to move except to what may reasonably be judged an improved position.

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1. Gladstone MSS: Acland - Gladstone, March 1, 1863. (B.M. Add. MSS. 44091).

2. Gladstone MSS: Gladstone - Acland, March 18, 1863. (B.M. Add. MSS. 44091).

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.



Gladstone's need to be convinced that the liberals represented 'a change profound and permanent', and his search for 'a firmer standing ground', were to affect powerfully the course of the campaign.

The debates of 1864 showed the limits of the concessions Gladstone, and by implication the Cabinet, were prepared to make. Gladstone's mind was evidently turned by Bouverie's 1863 bill and the Oxford petition towards a measure which would open Oxford further to dissenters while retaining its Anglican foundation, and he prepared a 'most private' memorandum on the subject on July 6, 1863.<sup>1</sup> I will return to this at greater length later, but initially I want to concentrate on his attitude to the bills of 1864. It appears to me - though I admit I can find no supporting evidence in the Gladstone papers - that he arranged for Dodson's Oxford bill to be tabled early in the session to allow such a limited concession to be effectively implemented. The circumstantial grounds for my assumption are that the concession he was eventually to offer would have placed Oxford on a par with Cambridge, offering dissenters the M.A. without access to Convocation or to Fellowships.<sup>2</sup> This 'final' concession made, the Cambridge measure could then be rejected.

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1. Memorandum of July 6, 1863, in B.M. Add. MSS. 44752: F.311.

2. Gladstone: speech on second reading of Tests Abolition (Oxford) bill, March 16, 1864. Hansard 3rd Series, vol. clxxiv, col.121.

For their part the liberals probably proceeded on the assumption that it was better to push for what was immediately practicable (remedying the anomalous position of Oxford) and then, during the debates, try to get the further concessions of membership of Convocation and the freeing of fellowships. If they managed to 'leapfrog' successfully in this manner, an easier passage would be secured for Bouverie's Cambridge-orientated measure. So I would judge that the introduction of Bouverie's measure was delayed until the likely fate of the Oxford bill was known.

Bouverie introduced his bill on May 8,<sup>1</sup> fairly late on in the session. By that time the Oxford bill was doomed. At second reading, on March 16, where Palmerston decided to allow the bill to be carried into committee, Gladstone produced his concessions: they amounted, at that stage, to remedying the anomaly and no more.<sup>2</sup> Dodson grudgingly accepted them as a basis for discussion,<sup>3</sup> but found his university backers and their nonconformist allies adamant that no concession would be brooked. Goldwin Smith wrote to him,<sup>4</sup>

...unless people are assured that there is no fear of your Bill passing with an amendment excluding Nonconformists from Convocation you are likely to find a part of the support, not only among the Nonconformists but here, turned into indifference and perhaps into positive opposition at the next stage of the discussion.

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1. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxv, col.1383.

2. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxiv, col.121.

3. Ibid., col.158.

4. Monk Bretton MSS: Goldwin Smith - J.G. Dodson, April 10, 1864.

The bill's backers refused to accept Gladstone's amendment, and, although it survived committee, it was lost at third reading, after a tied vote, on July 1.<sup>1</sup>

Now, from the memoranda on university reform in the Gladstone papers it's apparent that, had the liberals shown themselves willing to accept the Cambridge formula as a final settlement of the university status of the Dissenters, Gladstone was prepared to make certain concessions which might have set university reform off on an entirely different course. His memorandum on Oxford reform of July 6, 1863<sup>2</sup> (another exists dated November 1867, which shows that his position had altered little after four years of liberal agitation)<sup>3</sup> posits a completely new type of university organisation. The 1863 memorandum begins with a proposal akin to that put forward by Gladstone during the second reading of Dodson's bill, to give dissenters degrees but no voice in the running of the university or colleges. He then goes on to allow Council to exempt from tests all professors (except in Divinity). But the last paragraphs are the most remarkable:<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxvi, col.679.
  2. B.M. Add. MSS: 44752: f.311.
  3. B.M. Add. MSS. 44755: f.206.
  4. Memorandum of July 6, 1863.

Why should there not be at Oxford Houses or establishments extraneous to the University.

Of which Heads or Masters should give security to the University by conforming to certain rules (on pain of discommunicating) for the care and discipline of their inmates.

These heads or masters to teach the youth in their own fashion.

Such youth to matriculate, and receive instruction, and take degrees in the university:

Instruction, i.e. from Professors -  
or from Private Tutors  
or within Colleges at College  
lectures so far as Colleges  
might think fit to arrange.

Some analogy would be found between establishments of this kind and the Halls contemplated in Sir R. Peel's Irish Colleges Act of 1845.

Gladstone's constructions had certain anomalies.

Although the university was going to employ nonconformists he intended its government to remain wholly Anglican - which was, from the start, bound to cause friction. Nor did he make any detailed attempt to work out how the old Anglican university and colleges were going to coexist with the new Nonconformist halls. These anomalies give the impression that he was not wholly serious about his scheme, and indeed I have failed to find any references to it in any of the subsequent debates on university reform.

But the fact of its existence is fascinating enough. For it dramatically opposed everything the liberals envisaged in their own social ideal for the university while, after its own fashion, catering both for the current of liberal reform which wanted to see the position of the

university and the professoriate enhanced vis à vis the colleges, and the same social groups the liberals wanted the university to reach. What was missing, of course, was the paramountcy of free enquiry and secular organisation; yet there would have been little for the nonconformists to lose, had the scheme been advanced and had they accepted it. Education at nonconformist-run halls would undoubtedly have been much cheaper than at the 'liberated' colleges, and nonconformist strength at the universities could have been built up more rapidly, and with less risk of 'contamination' by Anglican or secularist ideas.

This remarkable, and rather dangerous, aspect of Gladstone's thinking on university matters seems to have been lost on the liberals, who saw him at best as a wayward but redeemable soul,<sup>1</sup> and at worst as a bigoted obstructive.<sup>2</sup> But it's not worth speculating on how they would have responded to such proposals, as Gladstone never publicly adumbrated them. The reason for this lies, I think, in the solidarity which was demonstrated between the academics and the nonconformists during the campaign of 1864. Resolute letters intimating their insistence on a settlement which gave them a voice in the government of the university came

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1. For a favourable estimate of Gladstone from an academic liberal see Gladstone MSS: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, July 21, 1865 (B.M. Add. MSS. 44303), or Bryce MSS: C.S. Roundell - James Bryce, June 24, 1865.
  2. For an unfavourable estimate see G.C. Brodrick, Memories & Impressions, p.238; or Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.244.

not only from the nonconformists and their spokesmen,<sup>1</sup> but from within Oxford itself, in the shape of a petition from forty-five resident teachers.<sup>2</sup> And on June 10 a remarkable demonstration of support for both bills was held at the Freemasons' Tavern, London, at which speeches in their favour were delivered by, among others, Goldwin Smith, Jowett, T.H. Huxley and John Bright.<sup>3</sup>

## VI

The university liberals were subsequently to make much of their alliance with nonconformity. In 1867 G.C. Brodrick preached the cause at the opening meeting of the Manchester Reform Club, and concluded fulsomely,<sup>4</sup>

All these objects, he believed, they would accomplish with the aid of that motive power which Lancashire, above all places, he believed, could supply: and so great was his faith in that motive power, that he almost ventured to differ from Mr. Goldwin Smith, and believe that from an unreformed parliament they might be able to attain some results.

Two years later, Goldwin Smith, who had also been present on that occasion, wrote to James Bryce in similar terms,<sup>5</sup>

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1. Monk Bretton MSS.: abstract of letter from Edward Miall to Goldwin Smith made by J.G. Dodson, March 29, 1864.
  2. Monk Bretton MSS.: Petition with covering letter dated May 18, 1864.
  3. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.137. A list of those present will be found in Appendix 5.
  4. Speech of February 4, 1867, in Warden Brodrick's Press-Cutting Book, vol.ii, p.157, col.4. (Merton College Library).
  5. Bryce MSS.: Goldwin Smith - Bryce, July 7, 1869.

However I have always thought that the hope of the Oxford Liberals lay not in any contest in Oxford itself - a narrow arena, where the enemy has long been, and still is, entrenched in overwhelming strength, but in victory in an ampler field. Liberalise the national legislature and the national legislature will liberalise Oxford at one strike without waste of lives and end this chronic bitterness. Our alliance with Manchester, which made our cause that of a party in the nation, has done more for us than all our fighting with Puseyism in Convocation.

The alliance tended to appear to them as a fusion of the economic robustness and moral straightforwardness of the provinces - T.H. Green's 'plain people' - with the energetic but 'masculine' intellect of the university, an analogue of the union of 'brain and numbers',<sup>1</sup> they envisaged in politics.

In fact the balance achieved between the liberals and the nonconformist bodies was a very satisfactory one. Both sides could credit themselves with conduct which was liberal, patriotic and far-sighted, rather than sectionally-interested and valid only in terms of tactics. The nonconformists left the management of the campaign to the university men, and were content to accept their ideal of the university as a 'national' institution, not a complex of confessional colleges. In a bravura speech on Dodson's bill E.A. Leatham, Radical M.P. for Huddersfield agreed that 'it is not the Church but Nonconformity which will have cause to fear' the passage of the bill. Nine out of ten young Nonconformists would swing over to the Establishment once they got to Oxford. But greater than the health of Nonconformity was 'the great and cardinal principle that the consciences of men are free'.

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1. John Morley, 'Young England and the Political Future' in The Fortnightly Review, (April 1, 1867), New Series, vol.i, p.492.



The achievement of civil liberty was the greater gain.<sup>1</sup> On the other side the university men regarded the nonconformists not simply as a convenient interest to ally with and live off, but as a body with genuine educational and social needs, to be cultivated and assisted.

While the alliance could not have subsisted on the self-interest of both groups alone, the circumstances of the time were such that it possessed a peculiar strength and effectiveness. I have dealt at some length with the pressures which impelled the academics towards a campaign for reform. Now I would like to turn to their counterparts on the nonconformist side.

First of all nonconformity, like the established church, was experiencing a crisis of belief. In an article published in the Fortnightly Review, P.W. Clayden, a Congregationalist minister and radical journalist who frequented the same London liberal circles as many of the academics,<sup>2</sup> examined the consequences for nonconformity of the decline in evangelical religious fervour. He saw a tradition, among the fundamentalist sects, of a 'democratic' recruitment of their leadership:<sup>3</sup>

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1. Speech of June 1, 1864, in Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxv, cols.1012, 1013.

2. See article on Clayden in D.N.B. supp.ii.

3. P.W. Clayden, 'The Ecclesiastical Organisations of English Dissent', Fortnightly Review (May 1, 1868), New Series, vol.iii, p.504.

It has been the strength of Evangelical non-conformity that it has been able to do this. It has given its leadership to its strongest men. It has conferred spiritual office, not on social superiority, but on spiritual ability. In doing this it has often sacrificed social advantages and seemed to make a vulgar choice, but it has gained in spiritual efficiency and popular power.

The fading of the evangelical impulse produced in the non-conformist community a structure, both of belief and of social order, closer to that of the rest of society. Its leadership tended to be wealthier, and also tended to be more flexible in its doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

Along with this growing sophistication inevitably went a discontent with the existing institutions of provincial culture. In 1865 James Bryce, inspecting schools in Lancashire for the Taunton commission, was in correspondence with R.D. Darbshire, one of the leaders of Unitarianism in Manchester, about the organisation of support for the Tests campaign in the north. Although Darbshire could write that he felt sure of 'the true response of such a question of the best Manchester public',<sup>2</sup> he regretted that Manchester politics were 'singularly devoid of intelligence and cultivation. Our political intelligence is at the lowest stage.' He went on,

We want sadly a knot of scholarly-minded speakers here. The League, that ought to have died when the Corn Laws finally gave way, trained economical speakers of some ability; but we have no other prominent leaders of thought.

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1. Ibid., p.503.

2. Bryce MSS.: R.D. Darbshire - James Bryce, July 3, 1865.

Bryce himself responded to Lancashire with mixed feelings.

He wrote to Freeman in May, 1865,<sup>1</sup>

Manchester is a much more agreeable place than I had supposed: not so dirty as London: the people rough, but straightforward and hearty: society over-ridden it is true by wealth, but that wealth employed in a bold generous way.

Later, in February, 1866, he was less enthusiastic:<sup>2</sup>

People sick of a southern squirearchy admire far off these Lancashire politicians. Near at hand the roughness and the dirt are seen.

Bryce's educational work gave him a good opportunity to observe at close quarters 'a state of society and a framework of notions so unlike what we have in the South of England.'<sup>3</sup> Despite the hostility he frequently encountered, 'as a Government emissary of tyrannical centralisation and an Oxford scholar who can't possibly know anything but Latin verse',<sup>4</sup> he found among the provincial intelligentsia a discontent with existing provisions and a willingness to consider new departures, understandable in a society which had just suffered the material and psychological disruption of the cotton famine during the American Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Bryce MSS.: Bryce - Freeman, May 22, 1865.

2. Bryce MSS.: Bryce - Freeman, February 3, 1866.

3. Bryce MSS.: Bryce - Freeman, May 22, 1865.

4. Ibid.

5. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i., pp.104-5. See also Frederic Harrison's conclusions after a visit to Northern industrial areas in 1861, in Autobiographic Memoirs (1907), p.257.

The closest co-operation the academics had from the nonconformists came from their social elite. Christie, who moved for an enquiry into the universities in 1845, and Heywood, whose motion was the occasion of the announcement of the royal commissions in 1850, were both Unitarians, as were Darbishire and James Martineau, two of their closest allies in the 1860s. But, although these could scarcely be termed representative of the mass of chapel-goers, we should remember that, according to John Vincent, nonconformity during the 1860s was in fact highly organised, power was concentrated centrally and hierarchically, and there was a great deal of cooperation between the various sects in agitating causes like the Burials bill and the abolition of Church Rates.<sup>1</sup> So a structure existed which made centralised collaboration with the academics possible, and also ensured that their contacts were with the most outward-looking elements in nonconformity.

But could these reasons by themselves account for the durability of the alliance? We must bear in mind that a successful outcome to the Tests campaign in 1864 was extremely unlikely, and that the nonconformist interest at Westminster was impotent without the backing of the rest of the Liberal party.<sup>2</sup> Yet this drawback was, I think, outweighed by a

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1. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party (1966), p.67.

2. Even after the favourable result of the election of 1865, the Liberation Society reckoned the 'nonconformist interest' at Westminster at no more than forty M.Ps. Liberation Society MSS.: Minutes of Council, July 26, 1865. (A/Lib/3, p.268).

consciousness on the part of both nonconformists and academics that they were in a similar situation. From the minutes of the principal nonconformist activist body The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control - the Liberation Society - which collaborated closely with the academics throughout, it is evident that the nonconformist cause too was suffering from<sup>1</sup>

that reaction in public sentiment which has encouraged the House of Commons to reject almost every measure of reform lately submitted to it.

In late 1863 the Liberation Society decided to abandon parliamentary action on its own initiative because of this unhopeful situation.<sup>2</sup> At the same time it took a greater interest in the Tests campaign.<sup>3</sup> The rationale behind this was evidently that if neither body could succeed on its own, combination might give them a better chance, while, in the long term, both stood to gain by changes in the parliamentary balance of power.

And, permeating all these relationships between non-conformists and academics, was the set of common political principles made explicit by their joint support of the North during the American Civil War. I shall deal with the ideological aspects of this in Chapter 4 : I think it impossible to over-estimate its importance. The close

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1. Liberation Society MSS.: Report: 'Parliamentary Action in 1862' (A/Lib/3, p.14).

2. Liberation Society MSS.: 'Memorandum on Parliamentary Action', December 1863 (A/Lib/3, pp.139-65).

3. Liberation Society MSS.: Minutes of Council, March 4 and 18, 1864. (A/Lib/3, pp.190, 193).

relationships politicians like Cobden and Bright built up with leaders of university liberalism like Goldwin Smith and Thorold Rogers, the mutual respect of academic and non-conformist, the common interest in the promotion of popular government and political reform, all effectively underwrote the Tests campaign.

So far I have presented the links between nonconformists and academics as shared interests and campaigns, but these were realised in, and on occasion created by, personal relationships. For instance, the campaign owed a great deal to individuals like George Osborne Morgan, who, although the son of a Welsh vicar, threw in his lot with the Liberation Society in the late 1850s, and became a prominent spokesman for nonconformist causes.<sup>1</sup> His brother was Henry Arthur Morgan, of Jesus College, Cambridge, also a reformer and the friend of Leslie Stephen and Henry Fawcett. Fawcett himself assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of the leaders of nonconformist radicalism, and invited them up to Trinity Hall to meet his liberal colleagues at Cambridge.<sup>2</sup> At Oxford Thorold Rogers was related to Cobden and, after he became Drummond Professor of Political Economy in 1862, his house became a port of call for radical politicians. T.H. Green met John Bright - 'a great brick' - there in 1864,<sup>3</sup> and Bright was moved by his sympathetic reception in 'the home of dead languages and undying prejudices' to wish that

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1. See article on George Osborne Morgan in the D.N.B., Supp.i.
  2. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, pp.81-2.
  3. Green MSS.: R.L. Nettleship's notes for Green's life. Dated May 6, 1864.

he had gone there himself.<sup>1</sup> A year later Green was inspecting schools in the west midlands for the Taunton commission, and making contact with leading nonconformists and educational reformers in the Birmingham area,<sup>2</sup> while James Bryce, as we have seen, was similarly occupied in Lancashire. And Goldwin Smith, whose first contact with organised nonconformity appears to have been his collaboration with Edward Miall on the Newcastle commission on Popular Education, 1858, had become a fixture on its platforms by the mid 1860s.<sup>3</sup>

The seal of the alliance with nonconformity was set at the Freemason's Tavern Meeting. Following this, a committee of five was set up to draft an Oxford bill for the next session. It included Roundell, Frederic Harrison, Charles Bowen and Grant Duff. Edward Miall of the Liberation Society attended in an advisory capacity.<sup>4</sup> Throughout, dissenting involvement seems to have been more with Oxford than with Cambridge, a reflection, I suppose, more of the acerbity of Oxford politics than of the needs of the dissenters. It might also be asked whether such an explicit link with the 'extremist' Liberation Society - whose programme ultimately envisaged the abolition of the State Church - did not to some extent endanger the success of the cause. Unquestionably Miall had a reputation as a firebrand and was thus a

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1. John Bright, Diaries, ed. R.A.J. Walling (1930), pp.279-280.

2. R.L. Nettleship, T.H. Green, pp.61-2.

3. See article on Goldwin Smith in the D.N.B., Supp.II, vol.iii, pp.328-40, and Justin McCarthy, Portraits of the Sixties (1903), pp.372-3.

4. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.136.



possible liability.<sup>1</sup> Yet from the papers of the Liberation Society it is quite evident that the society realised the sensitivity of the question and exerted its influence within nonconformity as diplomatically as possible, while leaving the process of parliamentary liaison to the academics.<sup>2</sup>

## VII

In 1865 and 1866 both bills were introduced and passed second reading, but national politics - in the shape of the dissolution and general election of 1865, and the fall of the Liberal ministry on the reform bill in 1866 - came between the academics and success in the Commons. The majorities for both bills were somewhat greater in the new House of 1866 than in the old one of 1865.<sup>3</sup> The new House contained a greater nonconformist representation,<sup>4</sup> and the liberal academics themselves were now represented in parliament by George Otto Trevelyan, sitting for Tynemouth, and Henry Fawcett, for Brighton. Another sympathiser, Goschen, was now in the cabinet.

Moreover, on April 6, 1866, the alliance with nonconformity and the radical party in parliament was further reinforced by a demonstration in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. The organisation of this was largely the work

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1. See article on Miall in the D.N.B.

2. Liberation Society MSS.: Minutes of Council, June 16, 1864. (A/Lib/3, p.208.).

3. Division on the Oxford bill, at second reading, June 14, 1865, was 206-190. (Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxx, cols.247-250.) Division on the Oxford bill, at second reading, March 21, 1866, was 217-103. (Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxxii, cols.712-715.)

4. Liberation Society MSS: Minutes of Council, July 26, 1865. (A/Lib/3. p.268.)

of James Bryce and R.D. Darbishire. During the election of 1865 Bryce tried to get Manchester candidates to commit themselves on Goschen's bill; Darbishire advised a more elaborate campaign:<sup>1</sup>

Now if we could concert a powerful cast of speakers for a meeting in the Free Trade Hall, and prepare the ground a little by some able newspaper writing and a pamphlet or two, I believe that a Manchester audience of the most respectable character could be brought to hear and lend weight to a bold declaration of opinion on this subject. The members of our own town and neighbouring places might be invited and thus enlightened, while the report of a well-arranged occasion of this kind would itself affect public opinion elsewhere.

Public meetings about university tests had been held in the provinces before - the Liberation Society had held several at the time of the passage of the Oxford act of 1854, to support Heywood's amendment<sup>2</sup> - but these had been in the nature of rallies of nonconformist opinion. The object of Bryce and Darbishire was a bipartisan rally. Darbishire suggested nonconformist speakers<sup>3</sup>

able and willing to keep to the intrinsic principles of the movement, and to avoid the more sectarian (manner) in which it easily presents itself to and through non-university men.

Darbishire had originally hoped for a meeting in November, but, presumably in order to coincide with the passage of the bill through the House, it was postponed

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1. Bryce MSS.: Darbishire - Bryce, July 3, 1865.
  2. Liberation Society MSS.: Minutes of Council, March 6, April 7 and June 9, 1854. (A/Lib/2, pp.58-9, 73, 77, 86).
  3. Bryce MSS.: Darbishire - Bryce, July 11, 1865.

until the April of the following year. Resolutions in support of Coleridge and Bouverie's bills were moved by nonconformists supported by academics and vice versa. George Brodrick, Frederick Temple, now Headmaster of Rugby, and William Sidgwick spoke for the academic liberals, William Graham, M.P. for Glasgow, Thomas Bazley, M.P. for Manchester, and several northern ministers and teachers for the nonconformists. The academics must have appreciated the concluding remarks of Jacob Bright, M.P.<sup>1</sup>

There is a peculiarity about this meeting that gives me much pleasure. It does not appear that Nonconformists are endeavouring to find their way into the universities so much as that members of the universities are trying to take hold of England.

Then, scrambling his metaphors with all the dexterity of the practised politician,

If Oxford and Cambridge stretch out the hand for help to Manchester, I do not believe that Manchester will turn a deaf ear to those universities.

Messages of support were read out from Fitzjames Stephen, Coleridge and Bouverie, Goldwin Smith, Fawcett, Freeman and Thorold Rogers,<sup>2</sup> the resolutions carried with only a few voices raised in dissent, and the proceedings of the meeting edited and published with an introduction by Brodrick.

1. G.C. Brodrick (ed.), Report of Speeches on the Abolition of Tests, pp.18-20.

2. Ibid., p.11.

The academic liberals, with their close connections with the world of 'quality' journalism in London, were always adept at publicising their cause in the newspaper and periodical press. Hardly a year went by in which one of the monthlies or quarterlies - Fraser's, Macmillan's, the Contemporary, the Fortnightly - did not carry an article on the issue, and mentions were correspondingly more frequent in the weeklies and the dailies; even the Times - whose leaders on university matters were written by George Brodrick - came round to their side.<sup>1</sup> Articles were supplemented by pamphlets and books, like Goldwin Smith's A Plea for the Abolition of Tests, 1864, Sir George Young's University Tests: An Apology for their Assailants, 1868, and Lyulph Stanley's Oxford University Reform, which themselves stimulated review articles.

Gladstone, however, still held out against concession. C.S. Roundell saw him just after the Oxford bill had passed its second reading on June 14, 1865 and energetically attempted to win him for the liberal cause:<sup>2</sup>

I appealed to his noble nature and his large sympathies - opened the fire with the growing (largesse?) of the College revenues, and that we must prepare to justify the possession of them before the public - I spoke of the splendour of our opportunities - of the growing necessity of people outside to look up to the Universities with veneration - pointed to the Universities as the true corrective to the materialistic tendencies of the age, in the present development of wealth and commerce.

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1. See list of Brodrick's leaders in Merton College Library.  
 2. Bryce MSS.: C.S. Roundell - Bryce, June 24, 1865.

Finally I told him that Oxford was no longer what it was - that the Act of 1854 had brought the able men to the front - that the able and liberal men were in possession of the colleges through the fellowships, that we were eager to turn to best account our great opportunities - that we wished to educate the people.

Gladstone was plainly impressed with Roundell, who, in 1866 was appointed secretary to the commission of inquiry into the response of Governor Eyre to the revolt in Jamaica,<sup>1</sup> and subsequently did much work for the Liberal leader as unpaid private secretary,<sup>2</sup> but he wasn't prepared to budge:<sup>3</sup>

To all this he warmly responded - assured me that there was nothing he had more at heart but hitherto, when he had spoken to his Oxford friends on these subjects he had found no response but obstructiveness - that it was quite new to him to hear of the Liberal spirit amongst the young men - and that if he were free-er, he would do anything to work in that direction.

And the liberals knew only too well who Gladstone's Oxford friends were. Although, in the general election which followed shortly on his conversation with Roundell, he lost his Oxford seat, Roundell's assumption that 'from Oxford to South Lancashire is clear gain'<sup>4</sup> was not borne out by events. The result broke the last tenuous links which had connected liberal and tractarian in Oxford, in joint service on Gladstone's committee.<sup>5</sup> Goldwin Smith could write that,

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1. Bryce MSS.: C.S. Roundell - Bryce, March 22, 1866.
  2. Gladstone MSS.: C.S. Roundell - Gladstone, January 7, 1869. (B.M. Add. MSS. 44418, f.76.)
  3. Bryce MSS: C.S. Roundell - Bryce, June 24, 1865.
  4. Bryce MSS: C.S. Roundell - Bryce, July 24, 1865.
  5. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.231.

despite Gladstone's opinion on the Tests issue, 'with a single exception all the young liberals voted for you at last,'<sup>1</sup> but Gladstone was so far from reciprocating their goodwill that he could write to a dissenter<sup>2</sup> in 1865 that, although, in the reform of Oxford,

the change in the balance of parties effected by the elections will cast upon the liberal majority a serious responsibility...I would rather see Oxford level with the ground, than its religion regulated in the manner which would please Bishop Colenso.

1867, with the debates on the reform bill of the Conservative government, was a difficult year for the Tests issue. Yet, in the hands of J.D. Coleridge and Grant Duff,<sup>3</sup> the Oxford bill made good progress, reaching the Lords, who threw it out on July 25.<sup>4</sup> Bouverie's measure - the Uniformity Act Amendment bill - was introduced on March 7, passed through its second reading and committee stages, but was lost by a snap division moved by the Conservatives at third reading, on August 7.<sup>5</sup> However, on the introduction of the Oxford bill, Bouverie's co-sponsor, Henry Fawcett, announced that he would move for the provisions of the Oxford bill to be made applicable to Cambridge.<sup>6</sup> He apparently did so without consultation, and the motion does

1. Gladstone MSS.: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, September 12, 1865. (B.M. Add. MSS.44303.)
2. John Morley, William Ewart Gladstone, (Lloyd's 2-Volume Edition, 1908), vol.i, pp.709-10.
3. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.254.
4. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxxix, cols.75-6.
5. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxxix, col.1050.
6. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.clxxxv, cols.296-7.



not appear to have been wholly welcome to the Oxford liberals, nevertheless it was accepted at committee stage, and a significant step was taken to amalgamate the two bills.<sup>1</sup>

But the amalgamation was not achieved without a struggle. The Oxford liberals were still determined on a bill specifically tailored to their requirements and, according to Goldwin Smith, they considered that Coleridge's bill, after Fawcett's amendment, 'advanced beyond the scope of our deliberations'.<sup>2</sup> While the bill was still before the Lords, but inevitably doomed by their hostility and the lateness of the session, they held a conference at the Ship Hotel<sup>3</sup>

for the purpose of framing, if possible, a measure which, if taken up by our friends in Parliament, may lead to a complete and permanent settlement.

But the settlement was relevant only to Oxford: Cambridge would be left to fend for itself.

The reaction of the Cambridge liberals was one of dismay. Fawcett called the draft Oxford bill 'an extraordinary jumble of discordant elements', and pressed for a simple joint measure rather than two separate ones promoted with an eye to internal institutional reform as well.<sup>4</sup> He was powerfully backed by a memorandum - no longer extant - from Henry Sidgwick which seems to have indicated Sidgwick's

1. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.235.
2. Gladstone MSS.: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, June 19, 1867.
3. Gladstone MSS.: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, June 17, 1867. (Both B.M. Add. MSS.44303.)
4. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.236. See also Gladstone MSS.: Henry Fawcett - W.E. Gladstone, February 15, 1868. (B.M. Add. MSS.44126)



inability to sustain for much longer a position he felt to be intellectually dishonest.<sup>1</sup> The decision rested with a joint meeting of Oxford and Cambridge reformers convened at Horace Davey's chambers, where the decision to proceed with a joint bill was carried by the casting vote of James Bryce.<sup>2</sup>

The Oxford and Cambridge Universities bill was brought in by Coleridge, Bouverie and Grant Duff on February 18, 1868.<sup>3</sup> Its second reading occupied May 13 and July 1. On the latter date it was carried by the fairly substantial majority of 198 - 140,<sup>4</sup> but in view of the approaching dissolution it was withdrawn on July 22.<sup>5</sup> By now, however, it was apparent that some sort of concession was going to be made: Gladstone, contemplating action on the Irish Establishment, was moving to a position of guarded sympathy. After the bill's introduction he had an interview with Goldwin Smith and proposed several detailed modifications.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he indicated that he was prepared to go further in the direction of a thorough-going settlement than they had imagined. His search for a 'firmer standing ground' had ultimately led him to take the liberal position.

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1. Sidgwick MSS.: Sir George Young - E.M. Sidgwick, February 28, 1906.
  2. Bryce MSS.: Sir George Young - Bryce, February 12, 1892.
  3. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.cxc, cols.926-7.
  4. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.cxciii, col.471.
  5. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.cxciii, col.1614.
  6. Gladstone MSS.: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, February 28, 1868. (B.M. Add. MSS.44303.)

The prospect of a settlement, and of a general election in the near future, brought the clergy out for the first time since 1864 against the bill. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, addressed a meeting to protest against the measure at Buckingham on April 18, and on May 9 the Cambridge Senate petitioned both the Archbishop of Canterbury and parliament against it.<sup>1</sup> But the High Church was already moving rapidly towards concession. The Guardian now supported abolition,<sup>2</sup> and both Liddon and Pusey attempted to sell Gladstone and the nonconformists a 50-50 share in Oxford provided it remained a religious institution.<sup>3</sup>

Gladstone won the elections in November with a decisive majority and a mandate to settle the matter of the Irish Church. Tests abolition had figured as one of the subsidiary causes agitated by Liberal candidates. According to Coleridge,<sup>4</sup>

there was scarcely an address issued by a Liberal Candidate which did not pledge the candidate to the support of it.

This possibly gave an exaggerated idea of the interest in the issue. As the sizeable number of academics who participated in the elections ~~was~~ to find out, the personality of Gladstone and the sociology of local politics played a greater part in campaigning than issues of policy. (I deal with this in greater detail in Chapter 6 ). But this dispiriting experience didn't dampen their enthusiasm for the

1. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge, p.60.

2. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.255.

3. Ibid., p.256.

4. Gladstone MSS.: Memorandum on University Tests Bill, dated December 17, 1868. (B.M. Add. MSS.44138.)

reform. In December Coleridge, who had been appointed Solicitor-General in the new government, memorialised Gladstone requesting him to take over the bill. In support of his case he cited seven factors: the unity of the party on the issue; the pledges given at the elections; the desires of nonconformity; the necessity of giving the impression of energetic legislation at the beginning of the ministry; the use of the measure to bind the party together when the Irish issue might tend to divide it; the ease of timetabling its progress through the House; and the disappointment that the bill's numerous partisans would feel, were it to fail yet again.<sup>1</sup> But Gladstone refused to commit the government, and, although the 1869 bill received the support of individual ministers, this did not prevent the Lords from rejecting it on July 19.<sup>2</sup>

But, during 1869, the demands of the university liberals were significantly increased. Henry Sidgwick's decision in June to resign his Trinity fellowship on grounds of conscience seems to have produced a quickening of activity at Cambridge.<sup>3</sup> Despairing of the willingness of colleges to alter their statutes voluntarily - the bill would simply remove the parliamentary prohibition on this - the Cambridge liberals pressed for this reform to be made compulsory.<sup>4</sup> After general consultations with university men and nonconformists, Roundell wrote in similar terms to Gladstone, and asked, moreover, that

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1. Ibid.

2. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.cxcviii, cols.143-5.

3. A.S. & E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.196; Auberon Herbert resigned his fellowship at St. John's, Oxford, in December; for similar reasons (see S.H. Harris, Auberon Herbert, p.94).

4. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.160.

the government adopt the measure.<sup>1</sup> Gladstone's response was that the time factor was critical: an unamended 'permissive' bill would probably pass the Commons rapidly and survive the Lords; he could not guarantee the same for an extended measure. Although he would not reject a move to expand the bill,<sup>2</sup> further resolutions from Oxford and Cambridge liberals, and a deputation of influential nonconformists which he received at Downing Street on December 15, did not persuade him to accept it as a government measure.<sup>3</sup>

One thing, vital for all concerned, the government have not to give, and that is time.

Gladstone's warning to Roundell<sup>4</sup> was proved by the events of 1870. Because of the lengthy and acrimonious debates on the Education Bill, the university measure was not introduced until April 25.<sup>5</sup> It passed its Commons stages rapidly enough, and went to the Lords on July 5th. There Lord Robert Cecil, now the Marquess of Salisbury, and, since June 26, Chancellor of Oxford, lay in wait. Salisbury's tactic was not to move outright rejection - the use of the Lords as a Conservative long-stop was a consequence of later party strife - but to set up, by a vote of 95-79, a select committee of the House to enquire into the safe-

1. Gladstone MSS.: C.S. Roundell - Gladstone, November 9, 1869. (B.M. Add. MSS.44423.f.69.)
2. Gladstone MSS.: Gladstone - C.S. Roundell, November 10, 1869 (copy). (B.M. Add. MSS.44423.f.75-6.)
3. Liberation Society MSS.: Minutes of Council, December 17, 1869. (A/Lib/4, p.211.)
4. Gladstone MSS.: Gladstone - Roundell, November 10, 1869 (copy). (B.M. Add. MSS.44423.f.75-6).
5. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge, p.78.

guarding of religious instruction at the universities.<sup>1</sup>

After submitting a first report, the committee voted, against the opposition of the Liberals who were serving on it, to prolong its existence into the next session, which deprived the bill of its chance of passing in 1870.<sup>2</sup>

The select committee was little more than a troublesome delaying tactic. Several representative liberal and clerical dons were ritually interviewed, and a report produced which advocated the imposition of a declaration that no tutor would teach doctrine hostile to the Church of England.<sup>3</sup> There was, I think, a certain significant alteration in the direction of the conservative approach: differences in religion seem, from the proceedings of the committee, to have given way somewhat to concern at the propagation of atheistical and radical opinions.<sup>4</sup> But the committee's conclusions mattered little. Liberal opinion at the universities rejected them out of hand,<sup>5</sup> and, at the beginning of the 1871 session, as he introduced the bill on behalf of the government, Gladstone, too, turned them down.<sup>6</sup> The Tory peers and the bishops who had won the select committee the previous session decided not to press the issue, and on June 16 the bill received the royal assent.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.260.

2. Report of the Select Committee (Parliamentary Papers 1871, vol.ix, p.91.)

3. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge, p.87.

4. See, for instance, the evidence of the Rev. E.H. Perowne, interviewed on July 28, 1870. Question No.516. (Parliamentary Papers, 1871, vol.ix, p.43;) this was commented on by Leslie Stephen in his despatch to The Nation, August 11, 1870.

5. Bryce MSS: Benjamin Jowett - Bryce, January 21, 1871.

6. Winstanley, Later Victorian Cambridge, p.86.

7. Liberation Society MSS: Minutes of Council, June 19, 1871. (A/Lib/4, p.347.)

## VIII

Before parliament had done with the Tests bill, Gladstone was meditating another instalment of university reform, a commission to enquire into the income of the colleges and universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Roundell, who seems to have been charged with drafting its remit, expected<sup>1</sup>

that a small and effective Commission of Inquiry would be able to ascertain the required financial facts in the course of a few weeks.

In the event the commission, under the Duke of Cleveland, was a more elaborate set-up, and did not report until the autumn of 1874, by which time the Gladstone government had fallen.<sup>2</sup>

However, the announcement of the commission did not meet with unqualified approval from the academic liberals. In December 1871 Gladstone received a critical memorial from Cambridge dons - inspired, apparently, by Henry Fawcett<sup>3</sup> - questioning the need for a purely financial enquiry, and calling for<sup>4</sup>

a Commission with full powers to inquire and recommend such alterations as may seem expedient, or...an executive Commission with power, in conjunction with the University and for several Colleges, to frame statutes for those bodies.

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1. Gladstone MSS.: C.S. Roundell - Gladstone, May 4, 1871. (B.M. Add. MSS.44430.f.180.)
  2. G.C. Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation', p.63.
  3. Gladstone MSS.: J.D. Coleridge - Gladstone, December 11, 1871. (B.M. Add. MSS.44138.)
  4. Memorandum enclosed with above.



The position of the liberals as a whole, however, was less straightforward than the Cambridge memorial seemed to indicate. For by 1871 there was a growing division within the liberal camp on the future educational role of the universities. As I hope I have indicated in this chapter, the matrix in which the Tests campaign was formed was composed of religious and political elements. The discussion of its educational objectives came relatively late on the scene, and was probably given some of the tension which marked it by the slow progress of the parliamentary campaign.

The most significant contribution towards the defining of these objectives was Mark Pattison's Suggestions on Academical Organisation, published late in 1867. According to Pattison's introduction, the book originated from discussions on university reform at Osborne Morgan's chambers in May 1866, presumably concerned with the current Tests abolition bill.<sup>1</sup> 'Have you seen Pattison's book - it is the clearest, finest thing any of us people had put forth.'<sup>2</sup> wrote James Bryce to Henry Sidgwick in January 1868,

But all the regular liberals call out that it is utopian: some that it is self-interested. Certainly we may fear that if other things have not produced a learned class in England, endowment will not.

Pattison envisaged a radical expansion of the teaching and research role of the university, the annexation of fellowships

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1. Mark Pattison, Suggestions on Academical Organisation, (1868), p.1.

2. Bryce MSS.: Bryce - Henry Sidgwick, January 4, 1868; see also Harrison MSS: Pattison - Frederic Harrison, February 18, 1868.



to research in specific disciplines, the reduction of the colleges to the position of halls of residence, and a drastic cheapening of the costs of a university education, on the pattern of Scotland or Germany.<sup>1</sup> As Bryce indicated, they immediately became a subject of violent controversy.

The movement for educational reform associated with Pattison's proposals began energetically enough with the publication, in October 1869, of the first numbers of the Academy, edited by Pattison's acolyte Charles Appleton, which was supposed to publicise the cause, the founding of the 'Association for the Organisation of Academical Study' on November 16, 1872<sup>2</sup> and the production of a volume, Essays on the Endowment of Research, in 1876. A good number of the liberals supported it, including Bryce and Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen, the Nettleship brothers and T.H. Green,<sup>3</sup> but it was as vehemently opposed by others, notably by Henry Fawcett at Cambridge and G.C. Brodrick at Oxford. It was, I think, significant that both Fawcett and Brodrick were ambitious politically, as they saw the value of the existing fellowship system as easing the transit of young men from the universities into the professions and public life, and suspected the movement to endow research as an attempt to move the universities away from public life, towards the subsidy of pedantry.<sup>4</sup> This reaction can be seen as under-

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1. Pattison, op.cit., Section 5. 'Of the Re-Distribution of the Endowments Fund'.

2. See article on Appleton in the D.N.B.

3. See Annan, Leslie Stephen, pp.37-8; Bryce MSS.: Henry Nettleship - Bryce, January 6, 1868; Melvin Richter, The Politics of Conscience, p.150.

4. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.114; and G.C. Brodrick, Memories and Impressions, p.355.

lying Fawcett's protest against the enquiry into university finances: he hoped for short-term reforms which would protect the old collegiate structure, and feared a larger, university-orientated, reform. And by 1875 Brodrick was writing,<sup>1</sup>

It is one thing to force reforms on reactionary, obstructive, and self-seeking corporations; it is quite another thing to aid the spontaneous efforts of corporations on the whole liberal, public-spirited, and progressive. If it should appear that few if any, public institutions in England can exhibit so good an account of their stewardship as the Universities and Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, it will assuredly be no reason for withholding any measures which may enable them to realise a still higher ideal of efficiency; but it will be an excellent reason for not dissipating, in the attempt to utilize, resources already so well employed.

The report of the Cleveland commission was followed by the creation of the Salisbury government of statutory commissions to redraft the statutes of both universities and their colleges. It was during this period of reform, from about 1877 through to 1882, that the remaining 'clerical' restrictions - the obligation to proceed to orders and the insistence on celibacy - were quietly repealed.<sup>2</sup> In Chapter 7 I deal with the implications for the academic body of further reform. Here, however, it's worth pointing out that the tendency of the reforms of the 1870s, to redress the balance in favour of the university vis à vis the colleges, was not universally welcomed. Brodrick thought it a political move aimed at the more radical colleges and at college fellows who went into politics,<sup>3</sup> while liberal heads of colleges -

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1. G.C. Brodrick, 'The Universities and the Nation', p.64.

2. Campbell, Nationalisation, p.211.

3. Brodrick, Memories and Impressions, p.182.

like Jowett, since 1871 Master of Balliol - had revived the collegiate ethos to an extent which seemed to make the proposals of the commissions, undertaken as they were against a background of falling college rents, almost irrelevant.<sup>1</sup>

## IX

The acrimonious debate in the early 1870s about the ends of a university education would seem to dispose of the view that the Tests campaign was a coherent effort by the academic liberals to create a system of higher education for a democratic England. The question was never absent from their minds, but it was only articulated coherently when repeal was almost certain, and, as I hope I have shown, did not produce any unanimity of approach. It would be more helpful, I think, to see the Tests campaign as the successful integration of several areas of concern to academic liberals.

In part, it was admittedly dictated by the self-interest of academics placed in an uncomfortable position morally and professionally. This discomfort was heightened by their involvement in radical politics, which made their position - as pensioners of conservative and socially exclusive institutions - a difficult one to sustain, unless they were pledged to reform them. If, as Goldwin Smith claimed, university reform needed political reform, politically radical academics had also to pledge themselves to university reform. A declaration to attack the Tests was an essential

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1. For Oxford see Ward, Victorian Oxford, p.298, for Cambridge see Rothblatt, The Revolution of the Dons, c. 7. 'The Ideal of a College'.

prerequisite for the academics' entry into the political arena in the 1860s, a conscious attempt to break down the alienation of their own institution in favour of a 'national' commitment.

The cause of Tests repeal was important not for what actually happened, but for the way in which the academic liberals interpreted it. In the political theories they were concurrently evolving - which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6 - they were not concerned with the alteration of society through 'positive' acts of intervention by the state, rather with the removal of impediments to individual effort and the efforts of individuals working in voluntary collaboration. The Tests campaign fitted smoothly into this theory of the nature of 'progressive' reform. It was, moreover, a campaign in which the demarcation line between enlightenment and reaction seemed to them firmly drawn, where they were fighting for liberal intellectual and educational values against the tyranny of traditional authority and vested interest. The same thing could be said of the debate on the American civil war and on franchise reform, but this was the cause which came closest to their own situation, and their certainty in this case of where right lay influenced, I think, their attitude to the wider field of 'secular' politics. The difficulty was that, in the wider field, the questions that confronted them were more ambiguous, the remedies less straightforward.

And how crucial was the academics' campaign, anyway, in determining the nature of the final reform? Most of them came away from the fray with their opinion of Gladstone little enhanced, yet, from my own study, I would conclude that Gladstone throughout was arbiter of the situation. In his Studies in Contemporary Biography, James Bryce observed his chief's tendency to absorb arguments about an issue while apparently remaining immovable, then, once his mind was made up, to act rapidly and decisively.<sup>1</sup> His behaviour in the case of the Tests seems to conform with this: in 1863 he realised that some sort of reform was necessary; in 1864 he tentatively moved, and then withdrew, his own scheme; after 1868, seeing that the tide was generally setting against Established religion, he adopted and extended the liberal academics' measures. With Gladstone against them, true, they may have got a 'permissive' bill; after he had determined to move 'to a firmer standing ground' they got a compulsory measure. Such was his command of the Liberal party that he could, and in 1873 did, attempt university legislation - the Irish Universities bill - which academic liberals branded as illiberal. This they managed to wreck, but they could not carry a reform scheme of their own against him.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of academic liberal consciousness in the 1860s, the Tests agitation was important for what it was rather than for what it did. For nine years it provided a structure which linked the universities, liberal politics,

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1. James Bryce, op.cit., p.409.

2. See Chapter 7, p. 428.

organised nonconformity and the intellectual world of London. In a changing political situation it provided a constant framework of reference. Moreover, being concerned with specific objectives, rather than with a long-term scheme of reform, it minimised areas of disagreement and promoted unity. Without its influence, the tendency for university men in journalism, in politics, or in residence at Oxford or Cambridge to succumb to the life-style of the situations in which they found themselves would probably have been irresistible, and their distinctive group-consciousness would have been dissipated.

CHAPTER 4University Men and Foreign Politics

## I

In an otherwise favourable review of Essays on Reform, J.R. Green remarked of the contributors that they seemed to 'stand aloof' from British politics, 'to feel more at home among the institutions of Switzerland and America than among those of England'.<sup>1</sup> His purpose in referring to this was to emphasise the alienation of intellectual and working man alike from the political society of the time, but the comment appeared to be, in itself, valid enough. Fifty years later A.V. Dicey, writing to James Bryce, noted of T.H. Green that<sup>2</sup>

he did not feel nearly as keenly interested in foreign nationalist movements as I think most of the Old Mortality were. I think he had a far keener interest in social movements at home, and probably somewhat more knowledge than I or perhaps most of us had.

And Bryce himself had, four years earlier, put 'the subject nationalities, and especially Italy' at the head of his list of 'the subjects which I recollect as chiefly occupying our thoughts and talk'.<sup>3</sup>

The charge of alienation is valid enough. As I pointed out in Appendix 1 socially and geographically the academics came from backgrounds which were not conducive to a close

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1. J.R. Green, review of Essays on Reform in The Saturday Review, vol.xxiii (April 6, 1867), p.438.

2. Bryce MSS: Dicey - Bryce, July 27, 1917.

3. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Dicey, November 14, 1913.



acquaintanceship with the environment of the mass of the population. In Chapter 7 I hope to show how, after the resolution of the political and university crises of the 1860s, this alienation gradually made itself felt once again. In attempting to understand the attitudes of the academics in the 1860s, however, I think it's important to see Green's indictment as valid mainly in the sense that the academics did not observe the political environment and perceptions of the working class at first hand. Their interest in foreign politics was not a form of political escapism. Granted their particular social and institutional background, there were several valid reasons why the study of foreign politics should appeal, and ultimately their interrelations with British politics in the 1860s were such that they came to play an important part in determining the alignment of the academics with radicals in and out of parliament during the political crisis of 1866-1867.

The two major foreign concerns of the academics were the unification of Italy and the American Civil War. I want to argue in this chapter that the first, while involving elements of a rather immature 'romantic' involvement with foreign radicalism, produced in them a conception of nationality in moral terms which came to underlie their view of the political community when they were prescribing for British political problems; while the second, by inducing a break with the politics of their own social order and an alliance with radical groups in the country, acted to strengthen their democratic convictions and practical interest in reform.

## II

The involvement of university men in politics was not unique to this generation. The radical sympathies of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Landor and Southey, were kindled at Cambridge and Oxford at the time of the French Revolution. The same could be said of Byron and Shelley a generation later and of the Cambridge Apostles a generation after that. Tennyson, John Sterling and Richard Chenevix-Trench in fact got as far as planning a landing on the southern coast of Spain to assist a liberal rising in 1830, and were lucky to escape with their lives from the debacle that ensued, when most of the Spaniards and one young Irish sympathiser were executed.<sup>1</sup>

Such involvement has continued to feature in British universities to the present day, notably in the 1930s. Obviously it is determined to a great extent by the course of foreign politics, but social and institutional factors also play a part. The fact that the universities, until comparatively recently, catered for the wealthier classes, meant that students were both distanced from the realities of British radical movements and permitted a closer contact with foreign politics. One could argue that this reflects a desire to dissociate political enthusiasm from personal interest: a way of avoiding the charge that political enthusiasm, honestly carried into practice, might destroy one's own order. In view of the later conservatism of a

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1. I have taken the details in the paragraph from the Dictionary of National Biography.

good many who participated in these movements, the argument is tenable enough. It was apparent enough in the generation I am dealing with. The policy of violent resistance to conquest Swinburne and John Nichol recommended for Italians they later condemned in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> But, unstable though this vicarious radicalism was, it was one of the bases of political involvement in the 1850s and 1860s.

It was reinforced by two factors: the improvement of communications and the traditional sympathies of the academics' families. The first was relatively simple: between 1840 and 1850 London, Paris, Berlin, Munich, Vienna and Trieste were connected to each other by rail and ferry. Travel between them became rapid and, at least for the middle classes, cheap. The second was less straightforward but, in both cases of involvement, no less significant.

The academics could draw on family traditions which, while not sympathetic to the idea of political revolution as such,<sup>2</sup> were critical of the continental autocracies. The fact that the most notorious western European rulers were Catholics -

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1. Both became violent Unionists after 1886. For Swinburne see the poem 'The Commonwealth' with its philippic against 'Judas Gladstone' he wrote in The Times July 1, 1886. For Nichol see William Knight, 'John Nichol' in Some Nineteenth Century Scotsmen (1903), p.229.
  2. For instance, many of their fathers were special constables at the time of the Chartist assembly on Kennington Common on April 10, 1848. The same went for a good many of them as well. All the students save one of King's College were enrolled as specials. See William Stebbing, Charles Henry Pearson, p.38.

the Emperor of Austria, the Pope, after 1852 Napoleon III, not to speak of the kings of Spain and Portugal and the Italian princes - meant that evangelical England had little time for them. Cavour noted in 1856 that 'the Protestant zealots headed by Lord Shaftesbury' were 'the most enthusiastic'<sup>1</sup> for the Italian Cause, and Edmund Gosse has described his fundamentalist father's enthusiasm every time trouble broke out in the Papal dominions.<sup>2</sup> While this link was, of course, stronger in their fathers' generation than in theirs, a certain enthusiasm for movements against continental repression was firmly implanted in their minds, especially during the traumatic year of 1848.

Seventy years later, A.V. Dicey could still recall the impression the events of the year made on a sixteen-year-old:<sup>3</sup>

It so happened that being brought up at home, and hearing the conversation of parents infinitely nobler and wiser than myself and also of their friends, I entered, not from any precocity, for I was very backward in learning, but from the influence of what I heard, into the events of '48. This really turned the whole intellectual interest of my mind towards political and constitutional controversies, under the sanest and most just of Whig teachers...in many ways I woke up to conscious existence in 1848.

James Bryce, to whom he wrote, was only ten at the time, but, like Dicey, was taken by his father to hear Kossuth on his British tour in 1851.<sup>4</sup> In Scotland the Hungarian patriot

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1. Cavour e l'Inghilterra (1913), vol.ii, part i, p.1, quoted in D.E.D. Beales, England and Italy, 1859-1860 (1961), p.24.

2. Edmund Gosse, Father and Son (1941 ed.), p.76.

3. Bryce MSS: Dicey - Bryce, November 12, 1918.

4. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.51.

stayed with Professor John Pringle Nichol, father of the founder of the Old Mortality,<sup>1</sup> and was entertained by James Stuart's father at Cupar in Fife.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was enthusiasm absent among the older university liberals. Jowett and Stanley went to Paris and ended up marching with a revolutionary column around the Place de la Concorde,<sup>3</sup> and Arthur Hugh Clough witnessed at first hand the struggle and collapse of the Roman Republic.<sup>4</sup>

The fall of the Republic prompted Clough to write 'Say not the struggle nought availeth' - which became much anthologised and, somewhat improbably, much sung in public school chapels - as a tribute and an encouragement to the rebels. He implied that the fight continued on a broader front, would ultimately be successful, and in the last stanza

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward look, the land is bright!

seemed to indicate that the real success of liberalism would come first in the west, in the United States.

In the meantime, however, the acquaintanceship of the academics with continental radicals was increased by the flight into Britain of the leaders of abortive revolutions.

1. H.W. Rudman, Italian Nationalism and English Letters (1940), p. 97.

2. James Stuart, Reminiscences (1912), p. 57.

3. Abbott and Campbell, Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, vol. i, p. 135.

4. See D.N.B. entry on Clough.

Herzen, Mazzini, Saffi, Louis Blanc, Pulszky, Kossuth, came to frequent the same London world, on the fringes of politics and journalism, that drew to it young men from the universities.<sup>1</sup> It was not a particularly tranquil exile community, personal, strategic, and national animosities abounded, but it impressed on them the character and aims of liberalism in Europe.

### III

The aftermath of 1848 had, I would suggest, three main effects. Firstly it initiated a concern on the part of the academics for the well-being of national minorities within multi-national empires; secondly, in a more strictly academic sense, it increased their interest in structures of national government through what they called 'the comparative method'; thirdly, it brought Italy to the fore as the prospective nation whose liberals seemed to crystallise intellectually and practically the values the academics believed the nation-state ought to possess.

The first was relatively straightforward. James Bryce traced his interest in minority rights to his reaction to the Austrian Empire's suppression of its dissident nationals after 1848.<sup>2</sup> His own particular interest was subsequently in the affairs of the Armenian minority in the Turkish Empire,<sup>3</sup> but this particular concentration of concern had better be seen

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1. See Frederic Harrison, National and Social Problems, p.116.

2. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.51.

3. Ibid., pp.180-5.

in the context of a widespread division of labour on the part of the academics. Freeman took in hand the cause of the Eastern Christians,<sup>1</sup> Westlake that of the Finns,<sup>2</sup> Dicey that of the Russian Jews,<sup>3</sup> Fawcett that of the Indians,<sup>4</sup> and so on. Despite subsequent breaches between them on domestic politics, they retained this concern to the end.

The 'comparative method' too, remained. In his last book, Modern Democracies, James Bryce devoted a chapter to it, which it's worth while studying in some detail, as on its simple axioms the social studies of the academics were based. More or less it ran thus: Human society obeys discoverable laws.<sup>5</sup> Human nature is by and large similar throughout the world.<sup>6</sup> Where societies differ is in the way these laws are adapted to the physical nature of a particular country or its state of historical development. 'That which entitles it to be called scientific', wrote Bryce of the 'comparative method':<sup>7</sup>

is that it reaches general conclusions by tracing similar results to similar causes, eliminating those disturbing influences which, present in one country and absent in another, make the results in the examined cases different in some parts while similar in others.

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1. See D.N.B., Supp.1.

2. Memories of John Westlake (1914), pp.28, 118.

3. Rait, Memorials of A.V. Dicey, p.220.

4. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, pp.341-52.

5. Op.cit., p.13.

6. Ibid., p.19.

7. Ibid., p.21.



The parallel with the statement of de Tocqueville's quoted in Chapter I (p.66) is obvious enough: the process of discovering social laws was one of accumulating facts about political institutions and the like, community by community, then shaking them down into common categories, and throwing away the rest as the product of 'disturbing influences'.

The 'comparative method' - if method it can be called - was crude. Its notion of human nature in politics was, as Graham Wallas later pointed out, an unrealistic one in which the rational and the disinterested predominated over the emotional and the instinctive.<sup>1</sup> And, even if this notion were accepted, the rise of industrial society, and its confrontations or interactions with traditional societies, deprived comparisons between communities of much of their validity. However, we must remember that at the time - and this is borne out by the examples quoted in Essays on Reform - crude arguments of comparison, using national stereotypes for purposes of political debating, were the rule. The young academics, to whom de Tocqueville was a model of analysis, had to suffer the ordeal of seeing him quoted out of context to condemn democratic government.<sup>2</sup> Against this they felt they had to develop his methods, by examining systems of government in their national and historical contexts, and show their true relevance to contemporary British problems. In the European upheavals after 1848, and through their acquaintance with continental liberals, they had an exceptionally fertile field of study.

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1. Graham Wallas, Human Nature in Politics, p.126.

2. See the essays by Leslie Stephen, Goldwin Smith, James Bryce in Essays on Reform, and by Frederic Harrison in Questions for a Reformed Parliament.

But, as Bryce's recollection indicates, the focus of the academics' attentions was Italy. Why Italy? I have already suggested that the evangelical protestantism in which they were brought up might have made its contribution. Dr. Beales, in his England and Italy, has suggested also the influence of classical learning<sup>1</sup> and enthusiasm for the consciously Anglophile liberalism of Piedmont.<sup>2</sup> Although his overall conclusion is that British enthusiasm generally was diffuse and moderate, reducing the Italian problem to 'a matter of "local freedom and reform in the several states"',<sup>3</sup> such factors might be expected to make academics more resolute. But could they be expected to sympathise also with the left extremists? For this was in fact what they did. In his own way the terrorist Mazzini stood as high in their eyes as the prudent liberal Cavour.

'Do you ever hear anything of Mazzini?', wrote Jowett to one of his lady correspondents in August 1861,<sup>4</sup>

He seems to be more abused than any other man in this world. I think he must be a great man, though a visionary and perhaps dangerous. The present state of Italy is greatly due to him. His defence of Rome raised the Italian character.

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1. Beales, op.cit., p.21.

2. Ibid., p.26.

3. Ibid., p.34.

4. Jowett - Miss M. Elliot, August 4, 1861, quoted in Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i., p.353.

That this tribute should come from an older and decidedly less 'enthusiastic' liberal is significant enough. The younger men - Bryce, Dicey, Sidgwick, Green - admired him with less reservation - Sidgwick wrote of him in 1868 to J.A. Symonds<sup>1</sup>

he is a fine arguer, like an eager torrent, at the same time subtle and clear... I talked politics to him: I determined to put boldly all the commonplaces about assassination, etc. (as far as I believed them) and see what he said: he was wonderfully fair, calm and impressive.

And John Morley considered that he spoke for his generation<sup>2</sup> when he wrote that<sup>3</sup>

Of all the democratic gossellers of that epoch between 1848 and 1870...it was Mazzini who went nearest to the heart and true significance of democracy. He had a moral glow, and the light of large historic and literary comprehension, that stretched it into the minds of men with social imagination enough to look for new ideals, and courage enough to resist the sluggard's dread of new illusions.

Mazzini's reputation has not fared well in the twentieth century. To a radical historian of the present day, E.J. Hobsbawm, he was personally ineffectual<sup>4</sup> and symbolised 'the disintegration of the European revolutionary movement into national segments.'<sup>5</sup> For the first Mazzini's 'deficiency in

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1. Symonds MSS: Henry Sidgwick - J.A. Symonds, n.d. (probably June, 1868).

2. John Morley, Recollections (1917), vol.i., p.80.

3. Ibid., p.78.

4. E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution (1962), p.164.

5. Ibid., p.165.

affairs,<sup>1</sup> was evident enough to his younger contemporaries, and ultimately led to their acceptance of Sardinian dominance in Italy,<sup>2</sup> but to see his national consciousness as ultimately a conservative tendency, as Hobsbawm appears to do, is to misjudge his moral and political impact on them.

It must be remembered that the impact of Mazzini's ideas cannot, anyway, be estimated apart from the occasion of their transmission to the British universities. In the next couple of pages I want to show that certain factors combined to bring Mazzini and his ideas to the notice of university men, while the latter's cast of mind was adapted to respond enthusiastically to them.

In the first place the liberal London society into which the younger dons ventured in the 1850s and 1860s<sup>3</sup> was one in which Italian refugees played an important part, from the former Carbonarist Panizzi at the British Museum, through Gabriele Rossetti, father of the poet, to numerous literary men reduced to language teaching,<sup>4</sup> suffering what Mazzini called 'the consumption of the soul, the lingering death, the Hell of Exile.'<sup>5</sup> They could hardly avoid being flung into their society, and that society itself could hardly avoid being a radical one, as those prepared to compromise with monarchy could forego exile for the relative security of Genoa or Turin.

1. Morley, *op.cit.*, p.78.

2. Frederic Harrison, *op.cit.*, p.124.

3. See my Ch.2 and G.M. Trevelyan, 'Englishmen and Italians' in Clio, a Muse (1930), p.111.

4. Rudman, *op.cit.*, pp.17-21.

5. Quoted in Morley, *op.cit.*, p.80.

The most important link between Oxford and Italian republicanism seems to have been Aurelio Saffi, who was, with his friend Mazzini and Armellini, dictator of the Roman Republic in 1848.<sup>1</sup> A gentle and cultivated intellectual, Saffi taught languages in London, and after 1853 in Oxford where from 1856 to 1861 he was Teacher of Italian at the Taylorian Institution.

At Oxford, Saffi had put Frederic Harrison in touch with many of the Italian republican leaders, and arranged for him to make several trips to Italy.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, in 1858, he tried to persuade Beesly to become secretary of a society to agitate for British intervention on the side of continental liberals, but Beesly demurred on the grounds that he was 'too much a follower of Bright to accept their offer.'<sup>3</sup> A commitment to the Brightist policy of non-intervention in foreign affairs on the part of some of the university men - usually those with a livelier interest in domestic reform - undoubtedly vitiated their involvement in Italian affairs. In Oxford, for instance, the group around the 'Old Mortality' was divided by the Crimean War, some, like T.H. Green, condemning it on non-interventionist grounds, others, like John Nichol and A.V. Dicey, approving it as the first stage of a crusade against continental reactionaries.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Lettere di Guiseppe Mazzini ad Aurelio Saffi (1905).

2. Harrison, op.cit., p.114.

3. Beesly MSS: Note in Saffi - Beesly, May 28, 1858.

4. For instance A.V. Dicey, quoted in William Knight (ed.), John Nichol, p.140.

Be this as it may, Saffi's presence at Oxford was still significant;<sup>1</sup>

To learn Italian from the poetic exile became part of the ritual of cultured Liberalism in Oxford and an initiation into the spirit of the Risorgimento

wrote Fisher, and James Bryce's action in volunteering in 1861 to serve with Garibaldi gives an idea of the power of Italian sympathies, which is borne out by the evidence of his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup>

Garibaldi became, for the academics, the incarnation of the radical nationalism whose spirit was supplied by Mazzini. Fifty years later Bryce wrote that only two figures were, to him, truly heroic: Lincoln and Garibaldi.<sup>3</sup> At the time, observing Garibaldi's triumphal progress through England in 1864, he wrote of his appearance 'a face the sweetest and gentlest I have ever seen'.<sup>4</sup> It is worth reproducing this letter, and another written about the same time to Freeman, as they give a vivid insight into Bryce's social and political views at the time, and may serve how to explain where the Italian patriot fitted into them. He wrote to his sister of the procession which accompanied Garibaldi through London:<sup>5</sup>

1. Fisher, Bryce, vol.i., p.51. See also Harrison, Autobiographic Memoirs (1911), vol.i., p.186.
2. A.V. Dicey, loc.cit., and Trevelyan 'Englishmen and Italians', p.118.
3. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Dicey, February 16, 1909.
4. Bryce - Minnie Bryce, April 14, 1864, quoted in Fisher, Bryce, vol.i., p.120.
5. Ibid.

a string of dirty and unshaven men carrying the flags and tawdry decorations of their trades unions and friendly societies; many temperance associations among them, Bands of Hope and so forth, shuffling queerly along with a mixture of conscious sense of dirt and self-importance in forming such a ceremony.

And later to Freeman:<sup>1</sup>

We have had great excitement à propos of Garibaldi; the reception was the most wonderful outburst of popular enthusiasm ever seen in London: no greetings of victorious Wellingtons or psuedo-Danish damsels at all comparable to it. Now he is gone, not without rage on the part of the people, especially of the North, who, when Gladstone and Clarendon had denied Lewis' interference, attributed it to the Queen.

Taken together, these quotations emphasise an ambiguity in the academics' involvement in the Italian liberal movement. They illuminate an intellectual republicanism and sympathy for democracy, but they also demonstrate the academics' distance from the realities of domestic politics. Bryce may have been more fastidious than most, but, according to Royden Harrison, even the Positivists at their most radical were inclined to exasperation at their proteges' behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Plainly, if the academics were to make common cause with the masses, it could not be through the intimacy of shared perceptions and sympathies. Yet the second quotation gives an idea of the roundabout way in which contact could be made, by shared enthusiasms and enmities in foreign politics.

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1. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, April 25, 1864.

2. Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists (1965), p.261.



This was, as I hope to show, particularly significant at the time of the American Civil War. But, in the context of Italy, I would submit that the political atmosphere of Italian liberalism had a direct influence on the content of academic radicalism, which strengthened it for that bitter contest. I think the germ of this influence lies in a phrase I quoted earlier from Fisher: 'the ritual of cultivated liberalism'. To this I want to turn.

It could scarcely be said of Mazzini that his political philosophy was lucid or cohesive. Even his partisan biographer, Bolton King, who graduated from Oxford in 1883, could not claim this for him. Nevertheless I think that, in two significant ways, it influenced the politics of the academics. In the first place Mazzini demanded a devotion to the ideal of democratic nationalism which was religious rather than calculating.<sup>1</sup> In the second place, he argued that this devotion would make politics a moral rather than a functional activity.<sup>2</sup> I have already shown in Chapter 1 that university men were in process of re-interpreting the perceptions implanted by the evangelical tradition on similar lines. What was important about Mazzini was that, from a position of honour and influence in a movement to which they were anyway sympathetic, he gave sanction to this re-interpretation.

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1. Bolton King, The Life of Mazzini (1902, Everyman ed.) p.256. See also Harrison, National and Social Problems, pp.124-5.
  2. Ibid., p.269; see also John MacCunn, 'Joseph Mazzini' in Six Radical Thinkers (1907), pp.190-2.

Mazzini's philosophy was idealist and rejected utilitarianism. It's not surprising, therefore, to find that he was venerated most by T.H. Green and his disciples at Oxford.<sup>1</sup> However, the central moral problem he stated - the incompatibility between the utilitarian's call for individuals to will the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and his use of the 'self-regarding' individual as the unit from which society was constructed - was common to utilitarians like Sidgwick as well.<sup>2</sup> This dilemma was stated in quite explicit terms in the context of a nationality struggling for freedom. Would that struggle get anywhere at all if there was no loyalty greater than that of the individual's self-interest?

Mazzini's response to this was to postulate a loyalty to the ideal of the nation, an ideal conceived not in racial, linguistic or geographical terms, but as a moral entity.<sup>3</sup> Again, he was vague about what precisely this meant, and in practice liberal nationalism boiled down to a reassertion of more primitive loyalties, but to the academics the concept had a certain validity. The ideal of citizens making sacrifices for the benefit of the 'nation' gave the moral basis for an ideology of co-operation rather than class-struggle within society. Writing in 1867 about the polity of a democracy, James Bryce's arguments for it were decidedly

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1. For Green see R.L. Nettleship, Memoir of T.H. Green, p.xiii; for R.L. Nettleship see the 'Memoir' by A.C. Bradley in Philosophical Lectures and Remains of Richard Lewis Nettleship (1897), vol.i., p.xxix; for Toynbee see F.C. Montague, Arnold Toynbee (1889), p.32.

2. Sidgwick MSS: 'An account of the development of his ethical view.'

3. Joseph Mazzini, 'Duties towards the Country', in The Duties of Man (1858), in vol.iv of Life and Writings (1867), pp. 276-81; King, op.cit., p.301.

Mazzinian:<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is undeniable that democracy - the participation of the whole nation in the direction of its own affairs - has a stimulating power such as belongs to no other form of government. By giving the sense of a common interest and purpose it gives unity and strength to the whole State; it rouses the rich and powerful by obliging them to retain their influence not by privilege so much as by energy and intellectual eminence; it elevates the humbler classes by enlarging their sense of vision and their sense of responsibility.

I will discuss the political philosophy of the academics in greater detail in Chapter 6 and will then deal at length with their conception of nationality. I do not believe they derived this from Mazzini and the Italian experience, but rather that these reinforced certain pre-existing tendencies. Above all, they reinforced the 'ritual' nature of democratic commitment. In Chapter 1 I discussed the 'democratic' nature of the evangelical revival, the notion that rich and poor were at one before the omnipotent God. The liberalism of the 1860s, the scheme of values in which civil and legal equality were to be realised within the moral framework of the nation, has a direct parallel to this. Both structures *apparently* succeeded by rejecting the premises of utilitarian individualism, and it could be said that in both cases the motive for this rejection was a fear that acceptance would mean the realisation by the deprived of the extent of their social inequality. This rationalisation was naturally never explicitly stated by either group, not simply because religious commitments are not reinforced by underlining the calculation behind them, but because evangelical and academic liberal alike came to their faith through a process which didn't involve direct social

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1. James Bryce, 'The Historical Aspect of Democracy' in Essays on Reform, pp.266-7.

calculation, which was a response to other, explicitly moral and intellectual, pressures.

The nature of this roundabout social commitment can be seen in the two passages on Garibaldi's reception in England I quoted from James Bryce. His progression was: liberal leanings bringing about Italian sympathies - Italian sympathies leading to identification with popular supporters of Italy in England. But, as the first passage indicates, there was a continuing absence of direct sympathy with popular politics in England. The academics were never able to overcome the alienation of two distinct life-styles, but a further crisis in foreign politics, the American Civil War, was to reinforce the indirect connection with popular politics and ultimately lead to a direct involvement. To this I now want to turn.

#### IV

As the sentiments of the British government and upper classes were vaguely pro-Italian anyway, the academics' interest in the Italian liberal movement did not result in a domestic political confrontation. It might have done so had they continued to sympathise with the republicans, but during the crisis of 1859-60 the majority, albeit with reluctance, accepted the dominance of Sardinia and its liberal monarchy.<sup>1</sup> On America, however, political society in England was divided, and the academics found themselves at odds with most of their own class.

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1. See Frederic Harrison, National and Social Problems, pp.124-5.

The American Civil War began on April 12, 1861. At first the attitude of the academics, in fact of English radicals in general, was ambiguous: if a detestation for slavery and a sympathy for democratic ideals led them to sympathise with the Federal side, a suspicion of the protectionist policies of the North, its reluctance to proscribe slavery, and a traditional enthusiasm for minority rights, held them in check. Goldwin Smith adduced these as reasons for his own initial impulse to sanction secession, as did Richard Cobden, but both soon swung round to the support of the North.<sup>1</sup>

That liberal beliefs were compatible with support for the secession of the South is demonstrated by the line taken throughout the war by Acton and Gladstone.<sup>2</sup> John Jermyn Cowell, a contemporary and friend of Henry Sidgwick and George Otto Trevelyan at Trinity, Cambridge, energetically campaigned for the Confederate cause:<sup>3</sup>

We were liberals - we execrated those who presumed anywhere to abuse or maltreat under the pretence of respect for 'religion' or order, people who only wished to be alone and be happy in their own way... I condemn this war, of course, as an inhuman aggression - but - to my indescribable confusion and disappointment, this crucial test divides us and you admire what I execrate.

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1. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, pp.319-21.

2. Henry Pelling, America and the British Left (1956), p.7.

3. Sidgwick MSS: J.J. Cowell - Sidgwick, September 15, 1863. Cowell's father, who had been a Bank of England agent in the United States, 1837-9, was a prominent publicist for the South, which indicates a reason for Cowell's attitude. See John Welsford Cowell, France and the Confederate States (1865), etc.

Cowell used the pro-secession arguments I detailed previously, and had a certain amount of success. By November 1863 Sidgwick's ardour for the North had a good deal abated,<sup>1</sup> and for most of the war Trevelyan was sympathetic to the South.<sup>2</sup> But, in their ambivalence, Sidgwick and Trevelyan were untypical of their generation, and anyway by the end of the war had come back firmly to the Northern side.<sup>3</sup> Cowell's arguments had been overmastered by a powerful counter-current which owed its persuasiveness partly to its domestic relevance, and partly to the sheer strength of the moral conception of politics inherited from the evangelical tradition.

It would be wrong to underestimate the issue of slavery in determining the academic's attitude to the conflict and to British interpretations of it. Hatred of slavery and the slave trade had, after all, been an article of the evangelical faith, and it was this inherited conviction (rather than any idea that the negroes were being deprived of political equality, as by and large they thought them, as a 'backward' race, unfitted for it)<sup>4</sup> that framed their perceptions. The war was, to T.H. Green, the responsibility of 'a slave-holding,

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1. Sidgwick - H.G. Dakyns, November 1863, quoted in A.S. and E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, p.102.

2. G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, p.62.

3. A.S. and E.M.S., op.cit., p.129; Trevelyan, loc.cit.

4. See, for instance, Charles Roundell's address to the Social Science Association on the Jamaica affair, with its assumption of negro 'inferiority' (my Chapter 5, p.271), and James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, vol.ii, chapters xciv 'Present and Future of the Negro', and xcv 'Reflections on the Negro Problem'.



slave-breeding and slave-burning oligarchy, on which the curse of God and humanity rests.'<sup>1</sup> John Morley, attempting to explain Gladstone's attitude, attributed it to<sup>2</sup>

the error that lay at the root of our English misconception of the struggle... We applied ordinary political maxims to what was not merely a political contest, but a social revolution... The significance of the American war was its relation to slavery.

The burden of the argument of Leslie Stephen's The Times and the American War, which he published in 1865, is concerned with the moral gymnastics the Times performed in attempting to prove that, while slavery was detestable, the war was not being fought to abolish it, therefore the South was in the right; or if it was being fought to abolish it, the North was condoning the likely barbarities of a servile war, and was therefore in the wrong, and so on.<sup>3</sup> Stephen started from the opinion that slavery was wrong, that, however diplomatically the North had at first masked this, it was fighting to destroy it.<sup>4</sup> Morality stood on one side, infamy on the other. The wilful failure of the Times to accept this meant that its attitudes to the war were not governed by morality, but were attuned to a political strategy. As an allegedly Liberal paper, it didn't state explicitly what to it was 'the true cause of the war', but adopted sly formulations. 'Far be it from us,' it pronounced on October 18, 1861,<sup>5</sup>

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1. R.L. Nettleship, Memoir of T.H. Green, p.xlii.

2. John Morley, Life of Gladstone, vol.i, p.527. See also Harrison MSS: John Morley - Frederic Harrison, April 26, 1871.

3. L.S., op.cit., chapter iii, 'Slavery and the War'.

4. Ibid., chapter vi, 'The Times and the Slavery Question'.

5. Ibid., p.35.



to dogmatise about democracy, or to attribute the Civil War to representative institutions. The secession of the South is certainly not a necessary consequence of any form of government. Yet it is not too much to say that the form which democracy has taken for the last thirty years, or since the Presidency of Jackson, was likely to lead to such a result.

'In other words', concluded Stephen, 'we won't distinctly say it, but we will hint it.'

The argument about democracy was therefore an importation by conservative forces in Britain. As Goldwin Smith wrote, they used the slavery issue before the war to belabour the American democracy, and ignored it, or obfuscated it, during the war in order to continue the beating.<sup>1</sup> It therefore fell to the academic liberals to bring the morality of the struggle again to the fore, in order to defeat the conservative attack on democracy.

'They have constructed',<sup>2</sup> wrote James Bryce a few years later of the anti-democratic propagandists of the period,

a monster like the Chimaera of the Iliad, terrible in every part, "a lion in front and a dragon behind, breathing forth the dreadful might of quenchless fire."

To the academics the object of The Times' coverage of the war seemed to create an appropriate environment for the display of the beast. The Times - and the bulk of the

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1. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.319.

2. James Bryce, 'The Historical Aspect of Democracy' in Essays on Reform, p.242.

British press, which followed its lead - created a Union driven by the mania of 'that Moloch of slaughter and devastation', President Lincoln.<sup>1</sup> Or possibly not, since the mob-dictator might only be the puppet of his military chiefs.<sup>2</sup> The power of both had been taken from corrupt assemblies, once they'd had the chance to bankrupt the state with borrowing, inflate the currency with paper money, and throw up tariff walls to destroy free trade.<sup>3</sup> While at the front the incompetence and venality of 'democratic' administration decimated its 'citizen' armies, and then flung Irish and German mercenaries, specially imported, into the breach.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the South, with its plantation aristocracy, its military abilities, its natural preference for free trade, was seen - slavery aside - as 'stable' and recognisably 'English'.<sup>5</sup>

Leslie Stephen made his brief the destruction of this scenario, but he prefaced it with an anecdote which set The Times' activities in their British context.<sup>6</sup> A former editor of The Times, he wrote, used to keep a shrewd, idle, clergyman simply to hang about the clubs and pick up, from the minutiae of gossip, the prevailing public mind of respectable

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1. L.S., The Times and the American War, p.62. (Quoting The Times, May 27, 1863.)

2. Ibid., p.59. (Quoting The Times, January 29, 1862.)

3. Goldwin Smith, 'The Experience of the American Commonwealth' in Essays on Reform, p.223, and Leslie Stephen, 'On the Choice of Representatives by Popular Constituencies', in the same volume, p.89.

4. L.S., op.cit., p.72.

5. Justin McCarthy, A History of Our Own Times, vol.ii, pp.116-7; E.D. Adams, Great Britain and the American Civil War (1925), vol.ii, p.282.

6. L.S., op.cit., p.4.

society. This he would transmit to Printing House Square where it would be processed, given a leavening of 'scholarship' and then retailed back to the public in the leaders. The anecdote was more than an embellishment; it identified the enemy of 'sober truthspeakings' and progressive politics as respectable society itself.

The opinion of 'respectable society' about the allocation of blame for the war was, later on, explicitly stated by Robert Lowe, who was, as a Times leader-writer, to some degree responsible for that newspaper's attitude:<sup>1</sup>

the political evils of American (can) be traced to that which to common sense would seem their natural fountain, the form of its government.

In fact, this was a debater's argument, which bore little relation to the facts of the case. Thoughtful conservatives less well placed than Lowe to project their ideas, like Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton and Charles Adderley, came about the same time to precisely the opposite conclusion, that the checks and balances of the Federal Constitution were a bridle on popular recklessness.<sup>2</sup> But the upper classes appeared to have made up their minds on the menace of popular democracy, and were prepared to exploit the war in general and the activities of the North as ample illustration of this. As Dr. Henry Pelling has written,<sup>3</sup>

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1. Robert Lowe, review (unsigned) of Essays on Reform in the Quarterly Review, (July 1867), vol.cxxiii, p.263. George Brodrick was also a Times leader-writer, but, because of his Federal views, was kept well away from the subject. (The History of 'The Times', vol.ii, p.450.)

2. Quoted in Henry Pelling, America and the British Left, pp.10-11.

3. Ibid., p.10. See also Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, pp.319-20.

the problems of blockade rights, of British maritime interests, of free trade and the supplies of cotton for the Lancashire mills, largely lost their relevance and became subordinate to the main debate on the merits and defects of a democratic system.

Here Dr. Pelling echoes the contemporary view of James Bryce, who wrote in February 1863 to Edward Freeman,<sup>1</sup>

the prospects of anything being done for ourselves in England seem so much connected with the progress of more democratic republicanism against oligarchy that we feel less disposed to acquiesce in secession.

At the beginning of the American struggle, university liberals inclined to a stance in domestic politics which was only mildly left of centre. Goldwin Smith, who was to become their leader, had most of his political connections with Whigs or Peelites, the latter predominating.<sup>2</sup> Academics who admitted to radicalism of the school of Cobden and Bright - T.H. Green and, for a time, the Oxford Positivists - were in a small minority.<sup>3</sup> The course of the war, and the reactions to it of the various sections of British society, was to alienate them from their old allies and give them new ones.

V

Three main factors which influenced this transition can, I think, be identified: direct contact with pro-Federal American intellectuals, identification with 'honest' reporting

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1. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, February 3, 1863.

2. Goldwin Smith, op.cit., c.xii.

3. For T.H. Green see Bryce MSS: Dicey - Bryce, July 27, 1917; for the Positivists see Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, pp.257-8.

of the war and admiration for the line taken by working people and their leaders during it. To the first of these I now want to turn.

With the moral considerations attaching to the issue of slavery, and with the implications of the Federal blockade of Confederate ports for the cotton industry, the course of the war was naturally followed with interest in Britain and, after over twenty-five years of steam navigation on the Atlantic, America could be relatively easily reached by those who wanted to find out for themselves what was going on. In the case of those university men who made the journey - Edward Dicey, Leslie Stephen, Lord Houghton, Goldwin Smith and Henry Yates Thompson had done so before the war ended - the result was a powerful reinforcement of their initial sympathies.<sup>1</sup>

This was substantially due to the fact that they discovered in America - especially around Boston - a comparable intellectual group, men like J.R. Lowell, C.E. Norton, the Adams family, E.L. Godkin and the Wendell Holmeses.<sup>2</sup> Although they made contacts throughout American political life - Goldwin Smith met Emerson, the historian Bancroft, Secretary of the Treasury Chase, Secretary of State Seward, General Butler and Lincoln himself - their closest links thereafter

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1. For Dicey see the D.N.B. Supp.II; for Houghton the D.N.B.; for Stephen, Maitland, Leslie Stephen, c.vi; for Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, c.xix; and Yates Thompson, An Englishman in the American Civil War (1971).
  2. Maitland, Leslie Stephen, p.113; Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.329. See also Edmund Ions, James Bryce and American Democracy (1968), p.45, and Rait, Dicey, p.64. In 1870 Dicey found Boston 'essentially English' and described his host, President C.W. Eliot of Harvard, as having an Oxford 'tone'.

were with the unitarian 'brahmins' of Boston.<sup>1</sup> The very fact that the brahmins existed was significant, as they defied conservative arguments that democracy was bound to bring about the extinction of cultivated and educated society.<sup>2</sup> Since they were militantly in favour of the Union and opposed to the Southern ethos on political and moral grounds, the inference their English visitors drew was that, if liberal-minded men who had experienced democratic institutions at work had no time for an undemocratic society, then there was even less justification for pro-Southern sympathies in Britain.

Visits to America were also supplemented by contacts with pro-Federal Americans resident in Britain. Young Henry Adams came over in 1861 as private secretary to his father, Charles Francis Adams, the American minister, and, as a sort of public relations officer for the embassy, found himself dealing with a public opinion which was largely hostile.<sup>3</sup> Although he classed the universities along with The Times, the Church and most of the aristocracy as pillars of that 'ideal eccentricity',<sup>4</sup> whose heart went out to the rebel South, he found congenial society which 'affected his whole life' in friendship with Charles Milnes Gaskell of Trinity

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1. Stephen's intimacy with Lowell and Norton lasted for life. (Maitland, loc.cit.). Armed with introductions from him, Bryce and Dicey went over in 1870, and established similarly close relations, especially with C.W. Eliot and Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior. (Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.136.)

2. Ions, loc.cit.

3. Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams (1918, Modern Library Ed., 1931), p.120.

4. Ibid., p.186.



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4. Ibid., p.186.



College Cambridge, and his undergraduate colleagues.<sup>1</sup> Adams was introduced to Cambridge society by his cousin, William Everett, who was also a Trinity undergraduate.<sup>2</sup> Everett, the son of the Boston Unitarian preacher and statesman, had matriculated in 1859, and, between then and 1863 became an Apostle, President of the Union and a close friend of younger Cambridge academics like Henry Sidgwick and Henry Jackson.<sup>3</sup> When Cowell complained to Sidgwick of what he considered the latter's irrational pro-Northern bias, he specifically blamed this on Everett's proselytising.<sup>4</sup>

Such contacts undoubtedly strengthened pro-Northern sentiment in the Universities, but they did more than that: they provided a standard of personal observation and experience against which to judge the way 'respectable society' and its press reacted to the war. I have already dealt at some length with their analysis of this, and don't intend to repeat myself. For the supporters of the North, however, it posed the immediate problem of getting publicity for their views. 'Sound' opinion on the issue was the prerogative of very few public prints. In 1864 Goldwin Smith wrote to Alexander Macmillan, who was publishing his Letter to a Whig Member of the Southern Independence Association - at the Professor's own expense - that his views made him 'an unmarket-

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1. Ibid., p.205.

2. Ibid., p.204.

3. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigiensis; Jackson MSS: file of letters from William Everett.

4. Sidgwick MSS: Cowell - Sidgwick, September 15, 1863.

able article on this side of the Atlantic'.<sup>1</sup> Two years earlier Macmillan had written,<sup>2</sup>

our Magazine (Macmillan's Magazine) has stood almost exclusively among the magazines, and stands with few public prints of any kind in advocating the cause of the North.

And Henry Adams could count only the Daily News (which had the Anglo-Irish E.L. Godkin as its New York correspondent),<sup>3</sup> the ailing Morning Star and the Spectator as publications at all sympathetic to Federal side.<sup>4</sup>

The academics were stimulated rather than cowed by the unpopularity of their opinions among their own class.

Leslie Stephen recollected, at the end of his life, that at Cambridge,<sup>5</sup>

the sense that we were in a minority in our own class gave a special zest to our advocacy. Many a college feast was resolved into a vehement debating society, and passions ran higher than has ever since been the case, unless during the Eastern Question of 1877, and the recent Boer War.

And, at Oxford, T.H. Green, a convinced and almost reckless pro-Federal, was struck by the enthusiasm of university men for the Northern cause:<sup>6</sup>

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1. Macmillan MSS: Goldwin Smith - Alexander Macmillan, May 29, 1864.

2. C.L. Graves, Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan (1910), p.184.

3. James Bryce, 'E.L. Godkin' in Studies in Contemporary Biography, p.374.

4. Henry Adams, op.cit., p.120.

5. Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, p.86.

6. Green MSS: T.H. Green - sister, October 17, 1862.

After all, in spite of our Toryism here, I believe there are more people sound on that point in Oxford than are to be found among the same number anywhere else in England.

After Green's death James Bryce wrote, corroborating his<sup>1</sup> evidence,

There were no places in England where the varying fortunes of that tremendous struggle were followed with more intense interest than in Oxford and Cambridge, and none in which so large a proportion of the educated class sympathised with the cause of the North.

The immediate effect of this confrontation was to ally them more closely with the newspapers and publishing houses which supported the North. This is demonstrated by the reform essays of 1867. Their publisher was Alexander Macmillan, whose 'soundness' on the war issue I have already alluded to. Macmillan had started as a Christian Socialist, but was moving towards more orthodox liberalism; in 1863 he had been chairman of Henry Fawcett's committee at the Cambridge borough election.<sup>2</sup> As publisher to both universities he was in contact with the younger dons, publishing work by Leslie Stephen, James Bryce and Sir George Young. In 1863 he published Edward Dicey's sympathetic Six Months in the Federal States and a year later, by publishing his Letter to a Whig Member, began a close connection with Goldwin Smith.<sup>3</sup> Macmillan cultivated close relations with his authors and the younger men could not fail to be drawn into the society

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1. James Bryce, 'T.H. Green' in Studies in Contemporary Biography, p.90.

2. C.L. Graves, Alexander Macmillan, pp.201-2.

3. See A Bibliographical Catalogue of Macmillan and Company's Publications from 1843 to 1889 (1891), and Macmillan MSS: Goldwin Smith - Macmillan, May 29, 1864 et seq.

of men like Thomas Hughes and John Malcolm Ludlow, who had been Macmillan's friends from the beginning of his business life and who John Stuart Mill saw as the North's foremost defenders.<sup>1</sup>

Ludlow contributed an essay to Questions for a Reformed Parliament (Hughes intended to, but eventually didn't); two other notable Northern partisans, Richard Holt Hutton and Meredith White Townsend of the Spectator were also among the reform essayists.<sup>2</sup> They had taken over the ailing weekly in 1861, and boldly set it on a pro-Federal course, thus attracting to it academic journalists like A.V. Dicey and Charles Henry Pearson.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, their war coverage was of a high standard. Their military correspondent, George Hooper who wrote on 'Army Reform' in Questions for a Reformed Parliament, was, according to the Dictionary of National Biography, alone in perceiving the significance of Sherman's controversial 'wasting' of Georgia as the critical move which would shorten the war.<sup>4</sup>

Among other contributors to the reform essays were Frank Harrison Hill, between 1861 and 1865 editor of the Northern Whig in Belfast, a Unitarian protégé of Hutton who

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1. John Stuart Mill, Autobiography, p.229.

2. See D.N.B. articles on Hutton, Supp.I, and Townsend, Supp. 2, vol.iii.

3. Rait, Memorials of A.V. Dicey, pp.49-50; Stebbing, Memorials of C.H. Pearson, pp. 94-5.

4. See D.N.B. article on Townsend, above.

had studied under James Martineau and had been tutor to the Darbishire family<sup>1</sup> in Manchester. According to the Dictionary of National Biography,

Alone of Irish journalists he supported the North in the American struggle, and he risked temporary unpopularity in the cause.

In 1865 Hill became the assistant editor of the Daily News, where he joined another contributor to the essays, the Scotsman, John Boyd Kinnear, a fervent Italian partisan and leader-writer on the paper<sup>2</sup>, which had, throughout the war, maintained a pro-Northern standpoint.

Just as the limited number of newspaper and periodical outlets available to Northern partisans led to a fairly close relationship with such journalists as were sympathetic, so too the academics moved closer in sympathy to the few politicians who took the Northern side. Before the outbreak of war Goldwin Smith, who became their effective leader, had in domestic politics largely been identified with the Peelite wing of the Liberal party, largely through his close working relationship with Gladstone in the reform of Oxford.<sup>3</sup> Smith was sufficiently moderate to be appointed to the Regius Chair by Lord Derby in 1858, and his Inaugural Lecture the

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1. See D.N.B. article on Hill, (Supp.2, vol.ii). (For the Darbishes see my Chapter 3, p.172.)

2. See my article, 'John Boyd Kinnear: Passages in the Life of a Scottish Radical', in the Journal of the Scottish Labour History Society, No.3 (1970).

3. See Gladstone MSS: correspondence with Goldwin Smith. (B.M. Add. MSS: 44303.)

following year - which I discussed in Chapter 1 - is largely an appeal to the traditional rulers of the country to respect the value of higher education and employ it to adapt to, and master, changing social circumstances.<sup>1</sup> The reaction of propertied society to the war was to destroy this hope. In 1864 he was writing to Macmillan that<sup>2</sup>

Palmerston's policy, and that of the House of Commons, is the balanced selfishness of the landowners and the commercial capitalists.

And in 1867 Acton, reviewing his Lectures on Three English Statesmen, commented that he reserved his especial venom for aristocracy.<sup>3</sup>

He supposes that it is connected in some way with the delusion of hereditary virtue, that it is founded on conquest, and subsists by an unnatural system of land tenure; and he rejects it as a foreign substance that preys on confiscated rights and properties.

Smith's disgust with the aristocratic attitude to the conflict drove him to identify himself with the resolute opponents of the South, whom he titled 'the Manchester School'.<sup>4</sup> I stress the personal element here, because what Smith understood by that term was something different from the triumphant ideologues of 1846. True, he accepted free market economics -

1. Goldwin Smith, Inaugural Lecture, p.12.

2. Macmillan MSS: Goldwin Smith - Alexander Macmillan, n.d. (1864).

3. Lord Acton, review in The Chronicle, August 31, 1867; reprinted in Essays on Church and State (1952), p.407.

4. Goldwin Smith, 'The Manchester School' in the Contemporary Review, vol.lxvii (March 1895), pp.377-88.

and had done so as early as his Inaugural, where he pays them an earnest and chilling tribute<sup>1</sup>

The laws of the production and distribution of wealth are not the laws of duty or affection. But they are the most beautiful and wonderful of the natural laws of God...

But he recognised that the moral qualities he associated with liberal economics were no longer displayed by successful North Country cotton-spinners. They were as partisan for the South as clubland Tories.<sup>2</sup> By 'Manchester School' he meant John Bright, Richard Cobden and half a dozen sympathetic Northern manufacturers headed by Thomas Bayley Potter, whom he took as remaining faithful to the full social and moral implications of the Free Trade Movement.

Unrepresentative of North-Country middle class opinion though Smith's contacts were - James Bryce wrote to Freeman in 1865 that Potter was 'unpopular, save for a small set'<sup>3</sup> - the energy with which he leaped into political action brought vividly to the public mind a new image of the university man, and seemed to open to university men a new political option, the 'alliance with Manchester'.<sup>4</sup> Recollecting the period thirty-odd years later, the Irish journalist Justin McCarthy wrote:<sup>5</sup>

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1. Goldwin Smith, Inaugural Lecture, p.32.
  2. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.322. Thomas Bayley Potter was, however, an errant pupil of the Manchester School, having supported the Crimean War and helped unseat Bright at the election which followed. (D.N.B., Supp.1.)
  3. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, May 22, 1865.
  4. Bryce MSS: Goldwin Smith - Bryce, July 7, 1869.
  5. Justin McCarthy, Portraits of the Sixties (1903), p.382.



As a rule the followers of Cobden and Bright had not until that epoch found themselves much in companionship with leading representatives of University culture in these countries. The University Don kept himself for the most part away from popular organisations and there was a sort of vague impression permeating society that culture and scholarship could not give much countenance to the popular doctrines about the equality of classes, the civic rights of man, and the rights of labour which were advocated from what was called the Manchester platform. I can well remember the delight not unmingled with surprise felt by Cobden and Bright when they found University scholars and magnates like Goldwin Smith presenting themselves at public meetings as champions of these popular but not socially recognised doctrines.

Cobden and Bright responded to Goldwin Smith's overtures. The Professor first appeared in public at a meeting of Potter's Manchester Union and Emancipation Society, called on April 6, 1863 to protest against the building of warships for the Confederacy in British shipyards.<sup>1</sup> Further lectures and pamphlets followed until, according to McCarthy,<sup>2</sup>

we read in every day's newspapers the account of the part he had played in some great controversy then occupying public attention.

1864 seemed to see the consummation of the relationship, with Bright's visit to Oxford. Goldwin Smith breakfasted on May 15; Bright reported:<sup>3</sup>

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1. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.322; E.D. Adams, Great Britain and the American Civil War (1925), vol.ii, p.136.
  2. Justin McCarthy, *op.cit.*, p.381.
  3. John Bright, diary entry for May 15, 1864, in R.J. Walling, ed., The Diaries of John Bright, p.279.

Greatly pleased with him; calm, thoughtful, conscientious and profoundly instructed he seems to me. It is a pleasure to listen to him.

On the next day, he left, suitably impressed,<sup>1</sup>

My little visit to Oxford has been an unmixed pleasure to me. Everything was beautiful - the buildings, the gardens, the weather, the season; and the society was most cultivated and liberal.

Just a month later he graced the academics' Test abolition meeting at the Freemason's Tavern.

While Bright was at Oxford, T.H. Green called to worship:<sup>2</sup>

I was in his company for a couple of hours. To my great enjoyment. I can best describe him as a great brick. He is simple as a boy, full of fun, with a pleasant flow of conversation and lots of good stories. He does not seem to mind what he says to anybody, but though he is sufficiently brusque, his good humour saves him from seeming rude. There is nothing declamatory or pretentious about his talk; indeed, though very pleasant, it would not be very striking but for the strong feeling it sometimes shows - I was pleased by his recalling as soon as I was introduced to him a letter which I wrote to him more than three years ago.

By and large the younger men, with their radical enthusiasms generated by 'positive' commitments like that to Italian unification, were more straightforward in their adoption of the Northern cause, less embittered than Goldwin Smith by the attitude of respectable society because they had been

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1. Ibid.

2. Green MSS: Green - sister, May 16, 1864.

less committed to it. Their American friends marvelled at their enthusiasm. Mrs. Adams, the wife of the Federal minister, told Bright of Lyulph Stanley:<sup>1</sup>

His talk rapid and earnest "would talk the hair off my head." Knows every minute detail of U.S. affairs. "Knows more than Mr. Adams a pile." (i.e. a heap of great quantity, more than Mr. Adams) of details of geography, etc.

And her son found Stanley's partisanship almost embarrassing:<sup>2</sup>

Stanley has the merit of being "plus royaliste que le roi"; at least when he has his aristocratic friends here to argue with. On indifferent occasions his love of argument would, I believe, lead him to question the existence of the sun; but his tendencies are certainly very strong towards democracy, or human equality, as he would rather call it; and he upholds our cause hotly on this side, even in his own family, where he meets an energetic opposition. I dare not always say yes to his doctrines myself.

Finally, although their participation in them was limited, the academics could appreciate the activities of organised labour in defence of the North. Working people, especially in Lancashire, were menaced by the Federals' blockade of cotton yet, on the whole, they continued to support them, drawing from Lincoln, in January 1863, this tribute to the steadfastness of the Lancashire operatives:<sup>3</sup>

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1. Bright, Diaries, March 9, 1864, p.271.

2. Henry Adams - John G. Palfrey, November 16, 1864, quoted in Henry Adams and his Friends (1947) p.27.

3. E.D. Adams, op.cit., vol.ii, p.109.

I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question (of human slavery) as an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country.

Oxford gave generously to the funds for the alleviation of distress in the stricken areas. In 1864 T.H. Green noted that £5,000 had been collected in the university - £400 of that at Balliol - despite the Toryism of the place.<sup>1</sup> A year earlier he had travelled to London to be among the audience - which also included Henry Adams and Karl Marx - at the great Trades Union demonstration in favour of the Emancipation Proclamation at St. James's Hall on March 26, 1863.<sup>2</sup>

From the attitude to the conflict taken by the working classes the academics concluded that they were prepared to take the moral view of politics, abnegating class interests, their concept of the 'nation' or 'commonwealth' required. Arguing from the Civil War experience, Richard Holt Hutton contrasted the straightforwardness and moral sense of the workmen with the superfine arguments and downright selfishness of the propertied classes:<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the working class, though they had a far deeper interest in the matter than the professional classes, and that an interest opposed to the line of policy they adopted, saw but one great idea involved in that struggle - that of freedom contending with slavery: and this decided them...they saw the one great issue, and left out of consideration all the comparatively unimportant issues, to which our professional classes attached such undue weight.

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1. Green MSS: 'R.L. Nettleship's notes for Green's life'.
  2. Richter, The Politics of Conscience, p.94.
  3. Richard Holt Hutton, 'The Political Character of the Working Classes' in Essays on Reform, pp.30-1.

He claimed that this solid conviction would provide a reformed House of Commons with a sort of moral ballast which would secure sensible policies, an argument also echoed by Henry Fawcett in the debates in 1866 on Gladstone's Reform Bill.<sup>1</sup> The arguments which probably carried greater weight among workmen, which interpreted the reaction to the war less in moral terms than as a projection of upper class hostility to their own organisation, do not seem to have affected the academic interpretation. E.S. Beesly's blunt statement of them at the St. James's Hall meeting was the exception rather than the rule:<sup>2</sup>

They (the upper classes) assign openly as their reason for supporting the South, that the slave-owners are gentlemen. They are passing the word round to stand by their order. Well, you stand by yours.

However, despite this enthusiasm, I cannot find much evidence that the academics played the coordinating role they were intellectually well fitted to perform among the various pro-Federal groups in Britain. The British pro-Federal agitation could be said to consist of three major components. First, there was an energetic, locally-directed working class movement, whose efforts rose to a climax in 1863, despite the hostility to the Federals of its own press, largely run by former Chartists whose hatred of the 'wage-slavery' of Bright and the middle class rule he represented

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1. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxxii, col.204. For a retrospective view of working class 'soundness' on the issue see James Bryce, Modern Democracies, vol.ii, pp.413-4.

2. Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, p.75.

was greater than their distaste for slavery.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, there was the campaign, in and out of parliament, of the politicians - Bright, Cobden, Forster, Potter - who were sympathetic to the North, which itself became more and more identified with the working class movement.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, there was the press and publicity campaign in which the academics for the most part participated, revolving round the few sympathetic prints, and the few social figures - Lord Houghton and the Duke of Argyll - bold enough to support the North, a campaign which existed more to assure the North that it had some support in Britain than to do anything else.<sup>3</sup>

Certain connections subsisted between these: the sympathetic press connected the academics with the politicians; public meetings and demonstrations connected the politicians and the working class agitation; relief work, and the particular involvement of the Positivists in the labour agitation in London, connected the academics and the working class. But the figure which really linked all three was Bright, and Bright, however sympathetically regarded by the academics, was not an effective co-ordinator. Professor Vincent has shown how his leadership was improvisatory, his political analysis minimal; though he welcomed support from the universities, he was incapable of adapting his campaign to

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1. See Royden Harrison, 'British Labour and American Slavery' in Before the Socialists.
  2. See John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, p.196 and E.D. Adams, Britain and the American Civil War, vol.ii, p.112.
  3. Adams, op.cit., p.107; see also Macmillan MSS: Goldwin Smith - Alexander Macmillan, April 24, 1864.

give the university men a role in it. In their turn, the university men were too unfamiliar with popular politics to determine a role for themselves. Under pressure of the situation, their political views were rapidly tending in a radical direction, but they were not being projected at a democratic audience. They might praise the working classes' fidelity to the moral conception of politics but they still directed their literature at the 'educated class' although they knew it would not be read. They were better known, and made closer alliances, in Boston than in Bolton.

For a summing-up of the political situation of the academics about 1865 I think we must return to J.R. Green. In 1867 he wrote of the reform essays that,<sup>1</sup>

They set before us with remarkable force... the strength of a demand for reform which knits together two classes at first sight so unlike, and yet between which there is so much similarity, as the artisan and intellectual classes, and which springs out of the alienation of both from the present state of English politics.

This shared sense of alienation, dramatically demonstrated by the American war, rather than any shared analysis of society or political programme, was to draw working man and university liberal together in the struggle for political reform.

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1. J.R. Green, unsigned review of Essays on Reform in The Saturday Review (April 6, 1867), vol.xxiii, p.438.



This much, however, must also be said. The 'alliance with Manchester' was not wholly an illusion. As I noted when I discussed the Tests issue, the options on University Reform open to the dissenters and their representatives in 1864 were not confined to that proposed by the academics. Other schemes - ranging from universities partitioned on confessional lines to a wholesale dispersal of endowments - might have carried the day. That they did not, that the academics sold the dissenters their philosophy of university reform, is, I think, substantially due to the meeting of minds on the issue of the American War.

CHAPTER 5The University Liberals and the Reform Agitation

Of books some great adventures...  
 a volume called Essays on Reform (1867)  
 issued in reply to the Cassandra prophecies  
 of Robert Lowe by Dicey, Bryce, Goldwin  
 Smith, Harrison, Leslie Stephen et al.  
 Leslie Stephen particularly good and the  
 whole thing a singularly arresting perform-  
 ance as stating with singular insight the  
 particular difficulties of our own time.

Harold Laski to Justice Oliver  
 Wendell Holmes, September 18, 1920.<sup>1</sup>

I

The publication of the reform essays - Essays on Reform  
 and Questions for a Reformed Parliament - in the spring of  
 1867 appears to mark the climax of the university liberal  
 group's involvement in politics. The essays were seen by  
 contemporaries as bringing both a new intellectual grouping  
 and its political role to public notice. As an intervention  
 in the debate of the time they remained for some of the  
 contributors a sort of political datum to which they tended  
 to refer back in later life, and subsequently they have been  
 praised by political scientists as well as historians as a  
 major contribution to the study of democratic politics.

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1. In Mark De Wolfe Howe, ed., Holmes - Laski Letters (1953)  
 vol.i., p.283.

But the main question I want to ask in this chapter is this: were the essays a projection of a wider political involvement, or were they themselves a type of political involvement, the one valid and adequate expression of their political view open to the academics? And the conclusion to which my inquiry has led is that the second alternative was the case. I think that the essays were the natural expression of the group-consciousness as well as the politics of the academics: given the nature of the debate and the position of the group, the form of its intervention was in a sense bound to be a literary one, and this, I think, illuminates both its strengths and weaknesses.

In its turn, I think this approach may broaden our understanding of the debate on reform in the mid-1860s by focussing attention on the intellectual response to the situation, a response which has hitherto been envisaged either in terms of literary criticism, with attention centred on the distinctive reactions of Carlyle, Arnold and George Eliot, or political analysis of rather an abstract kind, with somewhat disproportionate attention paid to the highly individual analyses of Mill and Bagehot.

The centenary of the reform essays gave an occasion for such a reinterpretation, but the opportunity was, I feel, lost. A Plea for Democracy, a reprint of the two volumes (ill-advisedly mutilated) contains an introductory essay by Mr. W.L. Guttsman which attempts to detail the process of composition and the nature of their reception, but is

perfunctory and inaccurate.<sup>1</sup> A commemorative symposium was also published - Essays on Reform, 1967 - containing essays mainly on matters of institutional reform by thirteen left-of-centre academics,<sup>2</sup> with an historical study of the original essays by Mr. H.L. Beales. Beales doesn't deal with the way in which the essays came to be written, and seems to be more concerned to provide a historical justification for the reform programme of the other contributors than to penetrate the political rationale of their nineteenth century counterparts. His essay is entitled 'A Centenary Tribute to an Appeal for Modernisation' - a word much in vogue in the mid-1960s - and it seems to suffer from a desire to equate the contemporary role of intellectuals in government with that of the academic liberals in the 1860s. Accepting that<sup>3</sup>

it (Essays on Reform) was the voice of the university mind of the day in anxious thought about the political needs of the day,

I find I have serious reservations about his version of what that mind was concerned with, and, by implication, what that mind was. Beales distils from the essays a programme of institutional reform drafted by writers who were 'experts through study'<sup>4</sup> and then equates this with other mid-nineteenth century organisations, like the Financial Reform Association, which apparently pursued similar goals. Aside

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1. I have written in greater detail about this in a review in the Historical Journal, vol. **11** (1968).

2. The contributors were H.L. Beales, J.G. Griffith, Lord Annan, Richard Hoggart, Peter Self, Samuel H. Beer, Sir William Robson, Peter Laslett, W.H.G. Armytage, Michael Zander, M.V. Posner, W.J.M. Mackenzie and Bernard Crick, who edited the volume.

3. H.L. Beales, loc.cit., p.7.

4. Loc.cit., p.8.

from the fact that I can find no evidence of any connection between such organisations and any of the reform essayists, I do not think that such a procedure in any way illuminates the distinctive nature of the academic attitude at that time.

I feel myself that to determine the overall political outlook of a group by reference to present-day political criteria is a dangerous procedure. I am also suspicious of attempts to relate contemporary political programmes to one another which confine themselves to theoretical analysis and do not study evidence which relates to personal relationships and particular historical situations. Nevertheless, I am also conscious that to attempt to combine a study of how the essays came to be written with an analysis of the political perceptions of the academics may confuse rather than illuminate. So, while this chapter and the next may be taken as an extended treatment of the academic response, this chapter will concern itself with the actions and relationships of the academics during the reform crisis, and the next with their rationalisation of the situation.

I want to begin by studying the political options open to the academics at the time their radical convictions were maturing, between about 1859 and 1866, because I think it is notable that, just as the forces which were to make for political reform were unable to coalesce during this period, so they, too, were isolated. Then I want to go on to the situation in 1866 which made action imperative, and finally to the circumstances which influenced the course of action eventually taken, and its political effect.

Two things are striking about the political involvement of the academic liberals before the reform crisis. Firstly, academics contributed relatively little to domestic political discussion, and such contributions as they did make were relatively tentative. Secondly, they had no close connections with the major forces making for reform in the country.

For the first, relatively little was written by any of them on the subject of political reform before the mid 1860s, although what little was published does indicate that their views were moving in the direction of the diagnosis of the reform essays. In 1855 George Brodrick won the Arnold history prize at Oxford for an essay 'On the different principles which the chief systems of popular representation have been based on in ancient and modern times'. The essay, which was read out at the Encaenia of 1855 before an audience which included Derby, Gladstone, and Montalembert,<sup>1</sup> was a cogent argument for democratic institutions, on two basic grounds which were to remain constant: the analysis derived from de Tocqueville, that the political institutions of a country must inevitably approximate to its social situation; and what I previously termed the 'evangelical impulse' - the conception of national government as a moral rather than an expedient entity. The latter,<sup>2</sup>

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1. Brodrick, Memories and Impressions, p.108.

2. Brodrick, 'On the different principles, etc.', p.15.

looks only to the ends to be obtained - public safety and material prosperity, and is content to secure these, if indeed they be secured, by the readiest and sometimes the most pernicious means,

while the former

considers the process of government as a means of moral training, not less valuable than the immediate results to be produced by it. It denies the title of "good government" to policies in which the noblest faculties of the citizens are left unemployed.

Brodrick concluded by stating that it was the duty of government to facilitate the ultimate extension of the suffrage to the adult male population.<sup>1</sup> Judging by the debates of the Oxford Union during the 1850s and early 1860s, in which most of the younger liberals took part, this position was generally shared by them.<sup>2</sup> However there was no endorsement of manhood or even household suffrage unaccompanied by fairly stringent safeguards. Fairly typical of the sort of motion which the liberals supported, but never seem to have carried, was that moved by T.H. Green and John Nichol on May 15, 1856:<sup>3</sup>

That it is the undoubted right of every Englishman to possess the suffrage, and that, as the time has not yet arrived to carry this principle into effect without serious danger, every means should be taken, by liberal development of education, to bring it about.

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1. Brodrick, op.cit., p.23.

2. Debates of the Oxford Union, 1895.

3. Ibid.



'Right' and 'occasion' always tended to be distinguished from each other by the liberals; even as late as 1867 there was no unanimity about the actual reform which should be enacted; but the tone of their argument changed dramatically. Here is Green speaking to a meeting of the Oxford Reform League on March 23, 1866:<sup>1</sup>

(the educated classes)...have been alarmed by the demonstrations. But we shall have to alarm them a little more before we get what we want. We are the last people to threaten physical force. If we took our opponents, the "philosophical liberals" at their word, we should have to resort to it, for they tell us it is absurd to claim representation as a right; but if the plea of right is not listened to, the plea of force alone remains.

Much the same could be said of Cambridge, with the possible qualification that Cambridge liberals seem to have been more enthusiastic devotees of John Stuart Mill and, after 1859, were more sympathetic to his distinctive views on franchise extension. Mill had been greatly influenced by Thomas Hare's two works on proportional representation - The Machinery of Representation of 1857 and the Treatise on the Election of Representatives of 1859. These seemed to him to provide a way of representing minorities while securing equality of political rights, and he publicised them in his Considerations on Representative Government of 1861.<sup>2</sup> Mill's enthusiasm was taken up by two of his Cambridge disciples, Leonard Courtney and Henry Fawcett;

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1. Oxford Chronicle, March 30, 1866.

2. Mill, Autobiography, pp.219-224.

Courtney, then and to the end of his days, was an enthusiast for the Hare scheme,<sup>1</sup> Fawcett kept ideology on a lighter rein. The two at that time disliked one another, Courtney decrying Fawcett's opportunism.<sup>2</sup> Certainly Fawcett's political career in the early 1860s showed some violent ideological oscillations: in a pamphlet of 1859 he adumbrated a very conservative reform scheme - proposing to enfranchise only those who had saved more than sixty pounds.<sup>3</sup> But by November 1860, as radical candidate for Southwark, he was advocating not only household but lodger suffrage.<sup>4</sup> Between 1860 and 1864, however, he also paid homage to Mill's principles. 'We can never do enough', Mill wrote to him in 1860,<sup>5</sup>

in pressing abroad Mr. Hare's plan, which, in my deliberate belief, contains the true solution of the political difficulties of the future. It is an uphill race, and a race against time, for if the American form of democracy overtakes us first, the majority will no more relax their despotism than a single despot would. But our only chance is to come forward as Liberals, carrying out the democratic idea, not as Conservatives, resisting it.

This meeting of minds was undoubtedly convenient for Fawcett, as Mill's wholehearted support of him in the contest for the Chair of Political Economy at Cambridge in 1863 showed.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Gooch, Lord Courtney, p.83. He resigned from Gladstone's government in 1884 over its failure to incorporate proportional representation into the reform bill of that year.
  2. Courtney MSS: J.E. Cairnes - Courtney, March 19, 1863.
  3. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.186.
  4. Ibid., p.191.
  5. Mill-Taylor MSS: Mill - Fawcett, February 5, 1860.
  6. Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.118

But the philosopher found that the closer his disciple got to active politics, the less reliable a supporter he became. Following defeat at the Cambridge Borough election in 1863,<sup>1</sup> and a good showing at a Brighton by-election early in the following year,<sup>2</sup> he began to cultivate the constituency in preparation for the coming general election. A speech on September 13, 1864 in favour of political reform gave Mill cause for concern:<sup>3</sup>

What I could have wished otherwise was not the omission to speak more definitely respecting Hare's plan, but the employment of an argument which tells against the need of such a plan, and which I think unsound, namely, that the working classes are greatly divided in opinion. Like other classes, they are divided in points not involving the class interests or prejudices, but not therefore less likely to be united on those which do.

Of other Cambridge men George Otto Trevelyan, after 1867 the great advocate of the enfranchisement of the country labourer, was still in the process of shedding the whiggism which had made him, for the first year or so of the American Civil War, support the South;<sup>4</sup> nothing in Henry Sidgwick's papers indicates any real interest in politics before the mid-sixties. Leslie Stephen was an active supporter of Fawcett's election contests and ran his campaign at Brighton in 1864.<sup>5</sup> From his sceptical attitude to proportional

1. Ibid., pp. 205-6.

2. Ibid., pp. 206-14.

3. Mill-Taylor MSS: Mill - Fawcett, December 2, 1864.

4. G.M. Trevelyan, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, p. 62.

5. F.W. Maitland, Leslie Stephen, p. 107; Leslie Stephen, Some Early Impressions, p. 91.

representation, we can conclude that he was more radical than his friend, but even he commented little on current politics until the crisis of 1866. Even in that year, Lord Houghton, visiting Cambridge to speak at the opening of new Union premises, could remark that the political studies increasingly pursued at the university seemed to have reinforced its apparent indifference to the need for reform.<sup>1</sup>

### III

However, the tentative nature of the academic involvement was not solely due to ideological reservations. The cause of reform progressed very little, after all, between 1860 and 1865. When John Bright revived the reform agitation in 1858-9, some interest had been forthcoming from the universities. Frederic Harrison, who had moved to London in 1856, wrote to E.S. Beesly about getting a group of university men together to agitate for reform in the newspapers in co-operation with Bright:<sup>2</sup>

Now what I should like to see would be some answer to the Times and the Saturday Review addressed to their readers and written at any rate from the same educational level.

Harrison realised that by themselves the university men could not get far, but he was plainly out of contact with the sort of political society Bright represented:

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1. Inaugural Proceedings of the Cambridge Union (1866) p.17.
  2. Harrison MSS: Harrison - Beesly, n.d. (1859).

It is possible his party already have some organisation at work of the kind and they might be on the look-out for literary co-operation. I cannot doubt that the reform agitation is organised.

Little, however, seems to have come of this, and the national agitation collapsed with the ignominious failure of the government reform bill in 1860. The academics did not intervene again until the height of the crisis of 1866-7, though when they did, the manner of their intervention was very similar to that prescribed by Harrison in 1859.

How can this failure to connect with popular agitation be explained? I think there are four main reasons. Firstly, the intellectual and academic climate of the early 1860s was peculiarly exciting, with the conflicts over Darwinism and Essays and Reviews. While these ultimately drove academics into political activity, they reinforced the Tests campaign rather than, at this stage, popular reform movements.<sup>1</sup> In the second place, the history of the Tests campaign indicates that until about 1864 the functional political contacts of the academics were slight, and, where they did exist, they connected them with the Whig and Peelite wings of the Liberal party, which tended to be less than enthusiastic about parliamentary reform.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, foreign politics, again ultimately contributing to domestic radicalism, tended, in the short run, to divert their attention from possible commitments in the field of domestic reform. I have already

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1. See Chapter 1, p.76.

2. See Chapter 3, p.145.

quoted Dicey on T.H. Green's distinctive interest in home affairs:<sup>1</sup> it was surely significant that Green was probably the most consistent partisan for Bright among the younger Oxford men.<sup>2</sup> The others found his policy of 'non-intervention' unpalatable at a time when such intervention seemed necessary to ensure the creation of a liberal Italy.<sup>3</sup> Finally, geographical dislocation debarred the academics from close contact with the base of Cobden and Bright's operations. I have elsewhere pointed out the predominantly London, home-counties and rural background of a sample of the academic liberals.<sup>4</sup> They had therefore little in the way of intimate acquaintance with the society which the middle class tribunes represented. They had to make a conscious effort to share Cobden and Bright's perceptions of the political situation. These were not suggested to them by their own milieu. Moreover, until the formation of the Reform League in 1865, there was no secure radical political base in London itself. These links were to be made by 1866, but they took time.

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1. See Chapter 4, p.198.

2. Bryce MSS: Dicey - Bryce, July 27, 1917.

3. See the debate in the Oxford Union on November 15, 1858, where a motion commending Bright's foreign policy was tabled by Green, opposed by Dicey, and defeated 38-2. (Oxford Union Debates). 'I am almost ashamed to belong to a university which is in such a state of darkness' was Green's verdict, (R.L. Nettleship, Memoir of T.H. Green, p.xxiv).

4. See Appendix 1.

After 1862 the American War and the Test bills meant that a certain dialogue was kept up between university liberals and radical politicians. In 1862 Goldwin Smith wrote to Richard Cobden,<sup>1</sup>

No-one can be more sensible than I am of the risks and evils attending a great and sudden transfer of political power; and yet I see the absolute necessity of struggling for a great measure of Parliamentary reform, as the indispensable condition of every other measure of improvement and justice...

Yet, while such shared concerns linked both groups, the alliance was closer to a balance of policies than an inter-penetration of ideas. In some ways the War and the Tests issue actually limited the options open to the academics. The politicians who were best placed to secure reform - Gladstone and Russell - disgraced themselves in the eyes of the academics by their pro-Southern sympathies in the war.<sup>2</sup> Gladstone's university position, it is true, gave him a form of connection with Oxford, but his freedom of manoeuvre was always circumscribed by his high-church allies. By the time he was sufficiently acceptable to the younger academics, in 1865, his position as university M.P. was no longer a tenable one.<sup>3</sup> As for Russell, whose position on university reform was closer to theirs, age and the exclusiveness of his whig life-style ruled him out.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Goldwin Smith - Cobden, October 27, 1862, quoted in Elizabeth Wallace, Goldwin Smith, Victorian Liberal (1957), p.145.
  2. For Gladstone and Russell's position in the war see Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, p.153.
  3. Gladstone MSS: Goldwin Smith - Gladstone, July 21, 1865.
  4. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, p.145.



Possibly ~~the~~ politician who might have come closest to a constructive appraisal of the academics' political role was Cobden. As John Vincent has noted, Cobden supplied the intellectual force in his famous partnership with Bright.<sup>1</sup> He had also developed in the early 1860s contacts with Goldwin Smith, Thorold Rogers, Frederic Harrison and Henry Fawcett.<sup>2</sup> While his oratory on behalf of the North in the American war brought Bright the enthusiasm of the academics, Cobden's speeches, where they touch on university matters, show a shrewd grasp of the academic mind, where Bright's references are merely debating flourishes.<sup>3</sup> His death on April 4, 1865 was probably a greater blow than any of them realised, then or subsequently.

Cobden was soon followed by the great obstructive himself. On October 18 1865, Palmerston died. 'He was becoming, if he had not rather already become, a power for evil and not for good', Grant Duff later told his Elgin constituents.<sup>4</sup> Few of his academic friends would have disagreed with him. But although they realised that with Lord John Russell premier a reform bill would soon be on the agenda, they were far from sanguine about its prospects. Bryce, who had been sounding out local opinion on reform in Lancashire during his school inspecting, noted relatively little change in attitudes to reform over the year. In May 1865 he had written to Freeman,<sup>5</sup>

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1. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, p.31.
  2. For Goldwin Smith see Reminiscences, pp.242-5; for Thorold Rogers see the D.N.B.; for Frederic Harrison see Vincent, op.cit., p.191; for Henry Fawcett see Leslie Stephen, Henry Fawcett, p.83.
  3. See Thorold Rogers, 'Introduction' to Richard Cobden: Speeches on Questions of Public Policy (1870), vol.i, pp.xii-xiv.
  4. Daily News, October 12, 1866. See also T.H. Green's reaction: R.L. Nettleship, Memoir of T.H. Green, p.xxiii.
  5. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, May 22, 1865.

Among the workpeople I cannot discover that there is any wish for extension of the franchise.

The position was similar in February 1866,<sup>1</sup>

There is a pretty strong feeling among the poorer electors about reform: among the non-electors, mostly apathy, among the rich people, often fierce hostility.

This was a fairly accurate reading of the political situation. Although the Reform League, which was to become the principal agitating organisation, was founded in London in February 1865, the first year of its operations was marked with little in the way of enthusiastic response to its efforts.<sup>2</sup> Nor, at this stage, did parliamentary politicians make much of an attempt to address a mass popular audience. Bright, for instance, did not start his speaking tours until the middle of 1866.<sup>3</sup> The absence of a strong reform organisation, even when the government introduced its bill in March 1866, inhibited any intervention by the academics. But both they, and the popular organisations, were to be given their chance by the circumstances which surrounded its rejection in June.

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1. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, February 3, 1866.

2. F.M. Leventhal, Respectable Radical: George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics (1971) p.68.

3. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, p.190.

## IV

That the academic liberals became, during 1866 and 1867, closely involved in the reform struggle - which itself developed into a debate on the fundamental nature of democratic politics - was due more than anything else to the personality and activity of the ablest individual opponent of Russell's reform bill, Robert Lowe. Reviewing Lowe's career thirty-five years later, James Bryce - in politics now faltering where he once firmly trod - wrote:<sup>1</sup>

Had the moderate bill of 1866 been suffered to pass, the question of further extending the suffrage might possibly have slept for another thirty years... Thus Robert Lowe, as much as Disraeli and Gladstone, may in a sense be called an author of the tremendous change which has passed upon the British Constitution since 1866, and the extent of which was not for a long time realised.

Now there is a sense in which, in hindsight, Lowe can be seen as the rather pathetic 'fall-guy' of the reform imbroglio. He was allowed to sound off against concession, he demonstrated the strength, or rather lack of it, of those elements in society which were of his way of thinking, and he was then discarded by his putative allies, the Tories, as ruthlessly as he himself had brought down the administration of his own party. Demos beckoned, and for Disraeli and Gladstone it was safe to answer her, and trust to their abilities in wooing her. But the academic liberals didn't see him in this light. If they couldn't foresee the nature of the mass-democracy of the future - Disraeli's 'angels in marble', Gladstone's Midlothian meetings - they had a pretty

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1. James Bryce, 'Robert Lowe' in Studies in Contemporary Biography (1903), p.306.

lively impression of the threat Lowe appeared to pose both to their conception of liberalism and to their credibility as a radical political group. Lowe was, after all, opposing not merely Russell's bill in particular, but any and every attempt to reduce the franchise - even surpassing Lord Cranborne in his obduracy.<sup>1</sup> He was, moreover, setting himself up as the spokesman in this matter of the educated classes of the country as a whole.

Asa Briggs has described Lowe as 'an intellectual pleading for government by the educated against government by the masses'.<sup>2</sup> This was more appearance than reality: he was further than the younger academic liberals were from any sympathy with traditional culture. Bryce noted that<sup>3</sup>

He professed, and doubtless to some extent felt, a contempt for appeals to historic or literary sentiment, and relished nothing more than deriding his own classical training as belonging to an absurd and effete scheme of education... His ideas of university reform were crude and barren, limited, indeed, to the substitution of what the Germans call "bread studies" for mental cultivation, and to the extension of the plan for competitive examinations.

Lowe might have agreed with Matthew Arnold's prescription, for the invaders of Hyde Park,<sup>4</sup>

As for rioting, the old Roman way of dealing with that is always the right one; flog the rank and file, and fling the ringleaders from the Tarpeian Rock!

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1. M. Pinto-Duschinsky, The Political Thought of Lord Salisbury, p.149.

2. Asa Briggs, Victorian People (Penguin ed., 1965), p.240.

3. Bryce, op.cit., p.305.

4. From the first edition of Culture and Anarchy (1869) omitted in subsequent editions. Quoted by Royden Harrison in Before the Socialists, pp.97-8.

but he would never have shared Arnold's motives. Nor did he share John Stuart Mill's careful concern for the delineation of individual liberties and collective opportunities; and the case for an 'efficient' rather than a 'democratic' government to meet the needs of the propertied classes - the 'ten thousand' - was being made out more adequately by Bagehot in the columns of the Fortnightly.<sup>1</sup>

The peculiar ascendancy Lowe possessed at this time rose out of a combination of personal qualities with a social milieu in which these could be particularly effective: this combination counted for more than the ideas themselves that he chose to express. Goldwin Smith, Benjamin Jowett and James Bryce,<sup>2</sup> all of whom knew Lowe well, left vivid descriptions of a man whose intellectual ability - and his own sense of it - overbore his political judgement, itself clouded by the physical affliction of near-blindness (he was an albino), a handicap which hurt him without arousing, as Fawcett's total blindness did, sympathy from others. Benjamin Jowett wrote about him to a friend in January 1867,<sup>3</sup>

The worst of planning anything for Gorgias is that the execution, even if he could be got to take it up, requires not more ability, but more policy, more reticence and management of mankind, than he seems to be capable of. He is the quickest, the clearest, the ablest, and one of the most public-spirited men (really) whom I have ever known, but he wants to do everything by force. He is the only man that I see who would fearlessly

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1. See The English Constitution (1867), p.6.

2. See Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, pp.310-11, Abbott and Campbell, Jowett, vol.i, p.421, Bryce, op.cit.

3. Abbott and Campbell, loc.cit.

attempt great administrative reforms. But when he came to have a whole profession, the Army, Church, arrayed against him, and he came to be deserted by his colleagues, he would be likely to sink under the load of unpopularity.

Something like this had, in fact, happened during his tenure of the Education Office, between 1860 and 1864. Although his Times obituarist could pronounce that 'No one left so profound a mark upon our educational system as he',<sup>1</sup> the tendency of his innovations - the system of payment by results, and of supervision by examination rather than inspection - was bitterly opposed, not least by 'the Prophet of Culture', Matthew Arnold himself.<sup>2</sup> And in 1864 an all-party assault, headed by Lord Robert Cecil, forced his resignation after he had been accused of tampering with the reports of his inspectors.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, a year later, Lord Robert Cecil was, in the columns of the Saturday, applauding Lowe's first assault on reform, in the shape of Edward Baines' Borough Franchise Bill.<sup>4</sup> Experiences in Australia and travels in America had given Lowe a profound distaste for democratic societies,<sup>5</sup> but this reaction was more securely rooted in a dogmatic and confident conception of utilitarian ethics and social thought. Lowe was a committed believer in the civic virtue

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1. The Times, July 28, 1892.

2. See D.N.B. article on Arnold. Supp.I, p.73.

3. Briggs, op.cit., p.265.

4. Pinto-Duschinsky, op.cit., p.187.

5. Vividly described in Goldwin Smith, op.cit., p.310.



of the market economy: contemporary economists like J.E. Cairnes might think his understanding of it primitive in the extreme,<sup>1</sup> but it penetrated his minimalist conception of government. A passage from a speech of 1866, made in reproof of the backsliding J.S. Mill, demonstrates his basic position:<sup>2</sup>

We are here to legislate for this country and if we look after our executive government pretty sharply - if we take care of our finance, and if we watch the Foreign Office, we shall be doing better than we should do by converting this House into an Academy for the instruction of the élite of the working classes.

The efficient promotion of economic liberty was the test of good government, and this activity was best left in the hands of those whose interests were directly affected:<sup>3</sup>

Persons also who have something to lose are less anxious to lose it than those who have little at stake, even though these last may by the loss be reduced to absolute poverty.

So it was in the interests of the working class to let well alone.

The utilitarian case against reform had been advanced by John Austin, and was currently being expounded by Bagehot, yet neither had had the benefit of the debating skills and the position at Lowe's disposal.<sup>4</sup> Goldwin Smith called him

1. Courtney MSS: J.E. Cairnes - Leonard Courtney, April 22, 1869.

2. A. Patchett Martin, The Life of Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke (1893), vol.ii, p.283.

3. Ibid., p.285.

4. For Austin see Leslie Stephen, The English Utilitarians (1900), vol.ii, p.319.



'the most naturally and spontaneously brilliant talker that I ever knew',<sup>1</sup> and he made full use of his gifts on the tractable material of the House of Commons and the 'educated classes'. James Bryce attributed the impact of his speeches to two main factors. The first was Lowe's own personality: like so many doctrinaires, his range of knowledge was extremely broad, as his utilitarianism fitted a mental template over any given collection of facts and arranged them in a manner which, to him, made sense:<sup>2</sup>

In Robert Lowe...a remarkable rhetorical and dialectical power was combined with a command of branches of historical, literary, and economic knowledge so unfamiliar to the average member as to have for him all the charm of novelty. The rhetoric was sometimes too elaborate. The political philosophy was not always sound. But the rhetoric was so polished that none could fail to enjoy it; and the political philosophy was put in so terse, bright, and pointed a form that it made the ordinary country gentleman fancy himself a philosopher while he listened to it in the House or repeated it to his friends at the Club.

Secondly, there was his position in the House:

The speeches...had the advantages of expressing what many felt but few had ventured to say, and of being delivered from one side of the House and cheered by the other side. No position gives a debater in the House of Commons such a vantage ground for securing attention. Its rarity makes it remarkable. If the speaker who attacks his own party is supposed to do so from personal motives, the personal motive gives piquancy. If he may be credited with conscientious conviction, his shafts strike with added weight, for how strong must conviction be when it turns a man against his former friends.

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1. Goldwin Smith, op.cit., p.311.

2. Bryce, op.cit., pp.296-7.

Moreover, he found a receptive audience in that part of society which, according to Bryce, 'called itself Liberal and was Conservative, disliked sentiment, and detested Gladstone.'<sup>1</sup> Bryce had in mind particularly the merchant and banking magnates, the Whigs, and journalists and publicists of the vintage of Delane, Reeve and Venables. These<sup>2</sup>

had theretofore belonged to the Liberal party. Most of them, however, were then already beginning to pass through what was called Whiggism into habits of thought which were practically Tory. They did not know how far they had gone till Lowe's speeches told them, and they welcomed his ideas as justifying their own tendencies.

The 'educated classes' who took the 'Whitehead torpedo' to their bosom, were the same as the sacred eccentrics whom Henry Adams had noted as the prime supporters of the Confederacy during the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Although the territorial aristocracy applauded, what concerned the university liberals was that Lowe and his most vocal supporters claimed to represent education and intellect. Bryce wrote:<sup>4</sup>

Robert Lowe was for some months the idol of a large part of the educated class, and indeed of that part chiefly which plumed itself upon its culture. I recollect to have been in those days at a breakfast party given by an eminent politician and nominal supporter of the Liberal Ministry, and to have heard Mr. G.S. Venables, the leader of the Saturday Review set, an able and copious writer who was a sort of literary and political oracle among his friends, deliver, amid general applause, the opinion that Lowe was an intellectual giant compared to Mr. Gladstone, and that the reputation of the latter had been extinguished for ever.

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1. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.15.

2. Bryce, op.cit., p.298.

3. Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, p.25.

4. Bryce, loc.cit.

Lowe's assault stimulated a twofold reaction from the academics. In the first place they recognised that the particular arguments he adduced against reform were effective enough, and merited a considered reply. They were much more respectful and fair-minded in their treatment of Gorgias than he was of them.<sup>1</sup> To George Brodrick Lowe's speeches were 'brilliant essays on constitutional government...never were the doctrines of Benthamism more triumphantly applied to a political question...'<sup>2</sup> To Frederic Harrison Lowe's Speeches and Letters on Reform, published in February 1867, was 'the only thing on Reform worth reading...he is the only one with the true key. And how perfectly his case is stated.'<sup>3</sup> Lowe's standard, 'good government' as the test of reform, had to be abided by, or at least reinterpreted in such a way that it sanctioned franchise extension. 'We cannot afford', wrote Brodrick, 'to leave so redoubtable a fortress, untaken, in our rear.'<sup>4</sup>

However, the appeal to 'good government' was also a tactic which could be used against Lowe. His analysis assumed that the body politic was currently healthy, that franchise extension would endanger it. The academics could on the other hand claim that the exclusive nature of the

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1. See Lowe's review of the reform essays in the Quarterly Review, vol.cxxiii, No.245 (July 1867), pp.244-77.
  2. G.C. Brodrick, 'The Utilitarian Argument against Reform, as stated by Mr. Lowe' in Essays on Reform, p.2.
  3. Harrison MSS: Harrison - E.S. Beesly, February 22, 1867.
  4. Brodrick, loc.cit.

representative institutions of the country inhibited necessary reforms, and produced a situation which did not augur well for the future. The Positivists, who could applaud Lowe's assaults on the notion of parliamentary democracy, were probably more alert than the other academics to the country's institutional deficiencies. Frederic Harrison wrote in March 1867 that<sup>1</sup>

Our people are ignorant below the standard of any civilised race north of the Alps. Our pauperism is the most colossal and corroding. Our public administration and our legal machinery the most chaotic; our municipal and sanitary system the most cumbrous; the state of our great cities and our labourers' homes the most utterly heartrending; the state of Ireland the despair of our policy.

A very similar indictment was made out by Albert Rutson, the editor of the reform essays, in his essay on 'Opportunities and Shortcomings of Government in England' in Essays on Reform. Starting from a rather more optimistic view of English society than Harrison's, and enumerating the agencies within it which might make for social improvement, he went on to deliver a similar castigation,<sup>2</sup>

When we remember that, notwithstanding all our extraordinary advantages, it is only in the South and Centre of Italy, in parts of the Austrian dominion, in Spain and in Russia, that we can find anything worse, and in no other European country anything so bad, we are compelled to ask how it is that so little has been accomplished.

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1. Frederic Harrison, 'Parliament before Reform' originally published in the Fortnightly Review (New Series) vol.i, (March 1867) and republished in Order and Progress (1875), p.128.

2. A.O. Rutson, op.cit., p.287.

Professor John Vincent has, in his Formation of the Liberal Party, attacked the liberal intellectuals of the 1860s for 'crying over the unspilt milk of the future, exhausting on apprehension energies needed for investigation, producing in the end an intelligentsia unpolitical apparently through disinterestedness, but actually made so because of its lack of relevant social information.'<sup>1</sup> To a certain extent this view is tenable. Although there is much social investigation in the reform essays, not all of it was written by the academics themselves, and much of what was has about it the stamp of someone 'mugging up' a subject rather than the distillation of profound knowledge - but I will discuss this in greater detail later. This much, however, I will say: in their own field of the reform of higher education, the academics had sufficient experience of the unreformed parliament to make them peculiarly sensitive to its obstructionist power in dealing with institutional reform.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the nature and tone of Lowe's assault on the supporters as well as the principles of reform, eagerly emphasised by his political clientèle, demanded a reply and a disassociation from the educated minority he claimed to speak for. Lowe was not content to state a theoretical case against reform: if he had been his audience would undoubtedly have been smaller. He stiffened it with violent hostility towards the supporters of reform, and the working classes in particular:<sup>3</sup>

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1. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party (1966), p.153.

2. See my Chapter 3.

3. Martin, Robert Lowe, p.273.

If you want venality, if you want ignorance, if you want drunkenness and facility for being intimidated, or if, on the other hand, you want impulsive and violent people, where do you look for them in the constituencies? Do you go to the top or the bottom?

As Royden Harrison has written,<sup>1</sup>

He was apparently ready to believe every story about the indolence, extravagance and violence of the working man which any down-at-heel professional man chose to tell him.

Apart from this, he credited the working class with every conceivable economic delusion. Once enfranchised, it would 'launch itself' as a 'compact mass' on British institutions, and subvert them in its own interests.<sup>2</sup>

In a Fortnightly Review article in March, 1867, Frederic Harrison described the 'inorganic' nature of the anti-reform forces before Lowe. His speeches gave this resistance direction, 'roused the upper classes to resistance, terrified the middle classes into hesitation, and stung the working classes into action.'<sup>3</sup> The last, the mobilisation of working-class political organisations and of popular leaders like Bright and Edmond Beales on a course which was given an urgency and relevance by the explicit nature of the challenge to it, brought the necessity for commitment home to the academics. They had to oppose and be seen to oppose Lowe or risk being classed with the bitter enemies of the classes they hoped peacefully to incorporate within the political system.

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1. Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, p.124.

2. Robert Lowe, Speeches and Letters on Reform (1867), p.54.

3. Frederic Harrison, 'Parliament before Reform', p.128.



## V

Lowe's assault decided the academic liberals on intervention, but why did they choose a literary method of appeal? And why did they delay their action for nearly five months after the failure of the government bill? In this section I propose to examine the way in which political action was integrated with the academics' situation between June and November 1866, when the preparation of the essays got under way. The result will, I hope, be to show how the academics' social position determined their relation with reform organisations and ultimately the manner of their intervention.

The reform agitation, as I mentioned earlier, struggled against apathy for the first six months of 1866. Only in May, when Lowe and the Adullamites put Russell's bill at risk, and in June, when they joined with the Tories to defeat it, was public opinion effectively roused. Thereafter both the predominantly working-class Reform League, centred in London, and the middle-class National Reform Union, built on the remains of the old Anti-Corn Law League and centred on Manchester, rapidly expanded their activities.<sup>1</sup> Popular agitation secured a dramatic triumph on July 23 with the fall of the Hyde Park railings, and thereafter, powerfully reinforced by John Bright's provincial speaking tour,<sup>2</sup> went on from strength to strength. In October Leslie Stephen summed up for the benefit of his American readers: the

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1. Leventhal, Respectable Radical, pp.73-4.

2. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, p.192.



Liberals' measure 'would have fallen altogether dead'<sup>1</sup> but for the violence of Lowe's attacks on the working classes. As a result of this, opinion had been stirred to such an extent that,<sup>2</sup>

A much wider measure must be proposed by the leaders of the Conservative party next session, if they are to carry the popular feeling with them.

When this had in fact happened, in June 1867, Goldwin Smith wrote, in a public letter to Howell, the Secretary of the League:<sup>3</sup>

It is impossible to doubt that the popular movement so effectively and, at the same time, so legally and peacefully conducted by the two combined associations (Reform League and Reform Union) has been the main instrument in turning the present holders of power from the opponents of the limited Reform Bill of last session into the advocates of household suffrage.

But even Smith, who, practically alone of the academics, knew many of the northern manufacturers who made up the Reform Union, and who spoke on behalf of the League fairly frequently, had otherwise no close connection with either body. From the minutes of the League, the peripheral nature of its contacts with intellectual radicals are made pretty obvious. They could be counted on for a donation or a speech, but they played no part in the day-to-day running of the

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1. 'England' in The Nation, vol.iii, (October 23, 1866), p.332. (Written October 5, 1866).

2. Ibid., p.333.

3. The Times, June 17, 1867.

organisation.<sup>1</sup> The League did manage to institutionalise them in its list of over a hundred honorary vice-presidents, but even there Goldwin Smith refused nomination.<sup>2</sup>

Even in the university towns there was relatively little involvement. At Oxford, Thorold Rogers took a leading role in setting up a branch of the Reform League in April and May, 1866. He became its chairman and moving force; but seems to have been the only academic who had a continuing role in it, although Goldwin Smith, T.H. Green and R.S. Wright addressed meetings from time to time.<sup>3</sup> At Cambridge even less seems to have happened. I have looked through the files of the local Liberal weekly, the Cambridge Independent Press, for 1866 and 1867 without discovering any major reform agitation - apart from a contested borough election in April 1866 - let alone any academic involvement in it, apart from a couple of speeches by Fawcett and Abdy the Regius Professor of Civil Law.<sup>4</sup> Now why was little action taken until the autumn? I think there are four main components to a satisfactory explanation. In the first place we have seen that, up to 1865, the academics had relatively little contact anyway with the popular reform movement and, in a sense, the particular challenge posed by Lowe increased this gulf. They felt that their prime duty was to appeal to

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1. See the minute-books of the Reform League, 1865-1869, in the Howell Collection, Bishopsgate Institute, and the report of the Reform Union's Reform Banquet in Manchester in the Daily News, September 26, 1866, which gives a comprehensive account of the Union's supporters.

2. Leventhal, Respectable Radical, p.63.

3. See the Oxford Chronicle, April 1866 - July 1867.

4. Cambridge Independent Press, April 21, 28, 1866.

those of their own class who were opposed to reform.<sup>1</sup> This in itself imposed a pattern of action on them. Parliament and the courts rose in July; the political society they were familiar with adjourned its debate until the autumn - or even later, as Gladstone and several members of his former cabinet wintered in Italy until the end of January.<sup>2</sup> The academics may have wanted radically to change their society, but they saw no reason to change their own style of life. Writing in the Nation in October, Leslie Stephen began his discussion of the reform agitation with the significant sentences,<sup>3</sup>

Men are returning by degrees from Continental rambles, from Alpine climbs, from Norway salmon-rivers, and from Scotch moors. And as they return they seem to be taking up with fresh eagerness several of the controversies which were opened without being concluded in the late exciting Parliamentary session.

He had been climbing in the Carpathians with James Bryce, Charles Bowen was in Norway, Frederic Harrison in Venice,<sup>4</sup> while Bright addressed demonstrations a hundred thousand strong in the northern cities. In a way there could be no more dramatic illustration of the social distance between them and the personnel of the popular movement for reform, but if they were to get through to others of their class it was common sense to bide time until it was back in town, and the parliamentary session relatively close.

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1. Houghton MSS: Rutson - de Grey, January 6, 1867.

2. Morley, Gladstone, vol.i, p.634.

3. Leslie Stephen, op.cit., p.332.

4. Fisher, James Bryce, vol.i, p.119; Cunningham, Lord Bowen, p.100; Harrison, Autobiographic Memoirs, p.299.

Secondly, even while they were in town, there were other political concerns which, if they did not bear directly on reform, nevertheless demanded their attention. The case of Governor Eyre was exercising the public mind. In January 1866 a commission had been sent to Jamaica to investigate allegations of brutality, illegality and judicial murder in Eyre's suppression of a native revolt in October 1865. Charles Roundell was its secretary, and its report, published on April 9, censured Eyre for the last and condemned the barbarous reprisals taken under the orders of two of his subordinates, Colonel Nelson and Lieutenant Brand. On July 27 a group of radicals headed by John Stuart Mill, Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Goldwin Smith and Thomas Hughes, resolved to prosecute Eyre, Nelson and Brand.<sup>1</sup> They constituted themselves the Jamaica Committee and by the end of the year had gained considerable support from radicals both in and out of parliament, including a large number of university men.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Vincent has noted of the Jamaica Committee that it, with the American War,<sup>3</sup>

united the Liberal intelligentsia with the Nonconformist conscience to produce the Fort-nightly school of politics.

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1. Edward John Eyre, article in D.N.B. Supp.2, vol.i, pp. 641-4.
  2. See list of members of the Jamaica Committee on January 1, 1867 in Jamaica Papers, vol.v.
  3. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, p.196.

This is certainly true, in that the liberals concerned interpreted it in the same way as they had done the American conflict - the stand taken in favour of Eyre by British political reactionaries was as much a reason for prosecuting him as what he had actually done. The same conclusions were drawn: Roundell, who was debarred by his official position from being a member of the Committee, was nevertheless quite explicit when he addressed the Social Science Congress at Manchester in October, 1866,<sup>1</sup>

These facts are before the nation; and the ultimate appeal in this great national inquest lies, not to a few literary cynics, but to the warm heart and rough but true instincts of the mass of the people. If I do not read the national verdict amiss, I read in it a record of burning indignation, and shame unutterable at the deeds of blood which, most unnecessarily, were perpetrated against an inferior race during the hell-like saturnalia of martial law.

It is surely significant that a much higher proportion of university men were engaged on the Jamaica Committee than were involved on any of the political reform bodies. It was an agitation which, in the long term, served the same ends, but, with its distinctive moral and legal implications, and its challenge to the 'literary cynics' - Carlyle, Ruskin and Tennyson and the other members of the Eyre Committee<sup>2</sup> - was particularly attractive to the university men. But it may also be argued that it was a cause which was too well adapted to the academic situation. To choose it, rather than a direct identification with the reform cause, was to choose the line of least resistance.

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1. Daily News, October 6, 1866.

2. See D.N.B. article on Eyre in Supp.ii.

Thirdly, university politics in 1866 were especially absorbing. I have detailed the progress of university legislation in Chapter 3: the reform upheavals may have to a certain extent impeded this process. The change of government killed both university bills, while the efforts of the academics to start a northern agitation in favour of Tests reform were somewhat blighted by the coincidence of their Manchester meeting on April 6 with a demonstration in favour of reform addressed by Gladstone in Liverpool.<sup>1</sup> Internally, Oxford was plunged into intrigues by the clerical party's management of the elections for the Hebdomadal Council, and by the Regius Chair of Modern History, vacant since the resignation of Goldwin Smith at the beginning of the year. From Bryce's correspondence with Freeman, the Liberals seem to have been greatly divided. In December 1865, Bryce and Freeman were terrified that the Liberal government might appoint James Anthony Froude;<sup>2</sup> by the middle of the year Bright was reported to be pressing the claims of Thorold Rogers on Gladstone, which was equally unacceptable.<sup>3</sup> The names of Bryce and Freeman, R.W. Church and Charles Henry Pearson were also canvassed.<sup>4</sup> When the Liberals fell, the prospect seemed to be the ex-naval officer and Oxford Tory party boss, Montague Burrows.<sup>5</sup> In the event, Derby appointed

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1. Bryce MSS: Goldwin Smith - Bryce, April 17, 1866.

2. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, December 2, 1865.

3. Bryce MSS: Freeman - Bryce, June 11, 1866.

4. Bryce MSS: Freeman - Bryce, July 1, 1866.

5. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, June 24, 1866.

William Stubbs in September. Stubbs, though a Tory, was a historian rather than a theological partisan, and Freeman at least heaved a sigh of relief.<sup>1</sup>

However, theological controversy continued, and now switched to Cambridge, with the publication in 1865 of Ecce Homo, a naturalistic account of Christ's life and teachings, written anonymously by John Robert Seeley, Fellow of Christs. Lord Shaftesbury fulminated that the book had been 'vomited from the jaws of Hell', and in less dramatic fashion it intrigued Henry Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen and Gladstone himself during 1866.<sup>2</sup> Further controversy came in November when F.D. Maurice was elected to the Knightsbridge Chair of Moral Philosophy. 'I fear', wrote Henry Sidgwick,<sup>3</sup>

that the peaceful times of Cambridge are passing away and that we shall presently be steeped in polemics almost to the same extent as Oxford.

Finally, the academic liberal group itself was changing and consolidating. Goldwin Smith, who had tended to be its leading light during the early sixties, was going through the personal crisis which contributed to the instability that clouded his later career. Towards the end of 1865 he

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1. Bryce MSS: Freeman - Bryce, September 16, 1866.

2. For Sidgwick see Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick - Mother, February 19, 1866; Henry Sidgwick - J.R. Seeley, 9, 10, 12 and 15, 1866; for Stephen (and Shaftesbury) see the Nation, October 23, 1866; for Gladstone, see Morley, Gladstone, vol.i, pp.599-601.

3. Sidgwick MSS: Henry Sidgwick - Mother, November 7, 1866.



decided to resign his Oxford chair;<sup>1</sup> shortly afterwards his father, injured in a railway accident, became manic-depressive and threatened suicide if his son were not constantly at his side. He sold his Oxford house and moved back to his father's estate near Reading.<sup>2</sup> Although he continued to appear frequently on radical platforms, he was no longer securely at the head of the Oxford liberals.

Smith's abdication was accompanied by, and probably contributed to, the growth of more or less formal associations to facilitate academic collaboration between university men both at Oxford and Cambridge and in London. I have already mentioned the Ad Eundem Club of 1865;<sup>3</sup> in 1866 it was supplemented by the Century Club in London. Such a scheme had been mooted in 1864 by Beesly and Harrison,<sup>4</sup> and Harrison was one of a group, including Lyulph Stanley, Henry Yates Thompson and Charles Roundell, which got the project going, probably in the spring of 1866 - certainly while the Liberals were still in power. The membership was predictable enough; I have appended Harrison's list below.<sup>5</sup> It met after dinner twice a week, at first in the Inns, later at the Alpine Club,<sup>6</sup> 'only to smoke, talk and organise';<sup>7</sup>

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1. Bryce MSS: Freeman - Bryce, November 26, 1865.

2. Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences, p.365.

3. See my Chapter 2, p.125.

4. Beesly MSS: E.S. Beesly - Henry Crompton, November 21, 1864.

5. See Appendix 7.

6. Frederic Harrison, 'The Century Club' (from the Cornhill Magazine, 1903) reprinted in Realities and Ideals (1908), p.376.

7. Ibid., p.371.

It was to uphold definite and very strict principles of political and religious liberalism. It was to help fight the battles which Gladstone and Bright, Mill and Spencer, were fighting in Parliament and public opinion. It was to have, not a social character, but a political and intellectual character. It was to consist not of celebrities, or of pleasant fellows, but of keen workers in the cause of thought and popular progress.

The Century Club included several London and provincial radical politicians and publicists, and was obviously the basis of the later Radical Club.<sup>1</sup> But it was also in direct line of descent from the debating and discussion groups of the two Universities. It seems almost superfluous to add that Harrison mentions its close association with the Tests abolition struggle and the writing of the reform essays.<sup>2</sup> Its very existence implied that the academic liberal group had made the transition from the universities to the metropolis which made such projects possible.

## VI

A fair amount of documentary evidence exists which bears on the preparation and publication of the reform essays, between the end of November 1866 and their publication. Essays on Reform came out on March 16 and Questions for a Reformed Parliament on April 27, 1867.<sup>3</sup> However, there are substantial lacunae, all the more irritating for being in a sense inevitable: it is pretty obvious that a project carried out by a group of young men, mainly at the bar and living in

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1. See my Chapter 7, p. 418.

2. Harrison, op.cit., p. 374.

3. See files of The Saturday Review, February 23 to April 27, 1867.

the same area of London, was much more likely to be discussed verbally than written about. Even the papers of the publisher, Alexander Macmillan, have proved largely unhelpful, doubtless because his office was within shouting distance of the Inns of Court. However, two important series of letters, from Albert Rutson to James Bryce and to Lord Houghton, survive to enable us to piece together the execution of the project.

The project appears to have been set on foot towards the end of November 1866, as London-based academics drifted back into their chambers from the long vacation. A letter from Charles Roundell to Bryce at Oxford dated November 29 indicated that planning had already reached a firm stage. 'Macmillan talked to me yesterday' Roundell wrote,<sup>1</sup>

I will see Goldwin Smith. I most heartily approve.

I wish to see you. My spirit is stirred within me by what I conceive to be the essential unsoundness and reaction of 'Society'. In very truth, I think the times are ripe for an Isaiah and a Juvenal.

It seems more than likely that the preliminary discussions were held during the twice-weekly sessions of the Century Club, although the possibility that the publisher, Alexander Macmillan, took the initiative cannot be ruled out. Macmillan was an enthusiastic Liberal and had been chairman of Henry Fawcett's committee when he stood for Cambridge in

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1. Bryce MSS: C.S. Roundell - Bryce, November 29, 1866.

1863.<sup>1</sup> The following year he became official publisher to Oxford as well as Cambridge,<sup>2</sup> and established close relations with Goldwin Smith on the issue of the American Civil War.<sup>3</sup> In the next two years he was to publish another two symposia in a rather similar format to the reform essays, Essays on a Liberal Education (1867) and Essays on Church Policy (1869) so the idea of starting a series of books which would further liberal ideas, the careers of able young academics, and the prestige of the house of Macmillan may have been floating in the publisher's head.

The precise composition of the originating group is still unclear, but from two letters Rutson wrote to Bryce in early December, he, Bryce and Charles Bowen appear to have been active from the first.<sup>4</sup> Bryce may well have provided the connection with Macmillan; his Holy Roman Empire had been a major success for the firm, running into a second edition by 1866.<sup>5</sup> Bowen, since the Saturday Review split of 1861, had been attempting to give the younger liberals a public voice, in the intervals of an unrepresentatively successful legal career.<sup>6</sup> Rutson, who seems from the beginning to have been charged with a general editorial control,

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1. Graves, Alexander Macmillan, p.200.

2. Ibid.

3. Macmillan MSS: Goldwin Smith - Macmillan, February 11, 1864.

4. Bryce MSS: Rutson - Bryce, December 10 and 11, 1866.

5. Graves, op.cit., p.214.

6. Cunningham, Lord Bowen, pp.93-4.

was more typical in being a briefless barrister. A Rugby contemporary of Henry Sidgwick and T.H. Green, he had been since 1860 a non-resident fellow of Magdalen. He settled in London with John Addington Symonds, where he seems to have contributed extensively to the Saturday Review, and embroiled himself pretty deeply in his friend's complicated emotional life.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence in their correspondence that an actual homosexual relationship existed between them, but Rutson's behaviour indicates, as Symonds' biographer, Miss Grosskurth, has noted, awkward and embarrassing emotions.<sup>2</sup> He declared his love first for Charlotte, Symonds' sister, who later married T.H. Green, and then for Catherine North, Symonds' future wife; both suits were checked by the disclosure that there was a history of insanity in Rutson's family.<sup>3</sup> Such disclosures were not uncommon in the Victorian academic milieu - in a similar way James Bryce prevented Henry Nettleship's marriage to his sister Minnie<sup>4</sup> - and may have been an unconscious stratagem on the part of a male-orientated group to prevent its break-up, but in Rutson's case there may have been some justification. He appears to have been very highly-strung and argumentative yet, as he confessed in a later letter to Lord Houghton, he found it very difficult to formulate his ideas logically and get them

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1. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, March 21, 1863.

2. Phyllis Grosskurth, John Addington Symonds (1964), p.106.

3. Ibid., p.105.

4. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Henry Nettleship, November 14, 1867. See also Bertrand Russell's account of the opposition to his first marriage (Autobiography, vol.i, p.

down on paper.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, apart from his Saturday Review articles, his contribution to Essays on Reform and a Fortnightly Review article on the Bulgarian atrocities in 1876, he appears to have written little else, although he remained politically active to the end of his life, as a member of the City of London School Board, Alderman of the North Riding County Council, and Liberal candidate in the 1880 and 1886 elections. He died in 1890.<sup>2</sup>

In 1866 Rutson's relationship with Symonds appears to have come to a crisis, and the pair broke off contact. They were not to resume their friendship for over a decade.<sup>3</sup> Before this Rutson had been occupying himself working as a voluntary almoner among the poor with another Oxford liberal, Christopher Cholmondley Puller.<sup>4</sup> So the prospect of immersing himself in the editing of the volume of essays must have come as a welcome relief, and he certainly seems to have flung himself into the task with energy. He was politically well-connected, being the nephew of William Ewart, the Liverpool radical M.P. and humanitarian reformer, and his family - merchants who had bought land - were Yorkshire neighbours of Lord de Grey, the future Earl of Ripon.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Houghton MSS: Rutson - Houghton, January 8, 1876.

2. Boase, M.E.B., vol.iii, p.360.

3. Grosskurth, op.cit., p.106.

4. Symonds MSS: Rutson - J.A. Symonds, February 20, 1865.

5. Information on the Rutson family derived from Burke's Landed Gentry (1952) under Rutson-Fife; Victoria County History: Yorkshire (North Riding), vol.i, pp.179, 380, 546, 548; W.A. Munford, William Ewart (1960), pp.xiv, 18.

The process of editing the reform essays essentially involved drawing together the threads which had been spun to connect the universities and London journalistic and radical life during the preceding decade. The group at the centre - Bryce, Bowen, Rutson and Macmillan - drafted a general plan of contents (of which, unhappily, no copy appears to have survived) and set about matching subjects with contributors. The first line of approach seems to have been to university contributors,<sup>1</sup> but Rutson wrote to Houghton that they hoped to get essays from some of the big names on the liberal side, from Frederick Temple, then headmaster of Rugby, Jowett, Forster, Mill and Stansfeld. Admittedly, such names would not come amiss in persuading Houghton, whose taste for the company of the notable was as highly developed as his taste for the literature of the notorious, but Rutson admitted that the academic and journalistic nature of the contributing group was such that<sup>2</sup>

it may be said (not truly, nor really to the point - if the essays have merit - but still so as to damage the book) "These writers are all mere mouth-pieces of Mr. Goldwin Smith and the Spectator". We think it very desirable that there should be some writer, or writers, who are really acquainted with public life, and of whom nothing of the sort could be said.

However, the first overtures seem to have been made to academics. Goldwin Smith and Bryce brought Macmillan up to Oxford for a 'council of war' early in December, and contact

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1. Bryce MSS: Rutson - Bryce, December 10, 1866.

2. Houghton MSS: Rutson - Houghton, January 15, 1867.



was made with William Lambert Newman, fellow of Balliol, whom Frederic Harrison had hoped to involve in writing for Bright in 1859,<sup>1</sup> and T.H. Green, whom Rutson hoped would write on 'Bribery'. Bryce himself selected his own subject, the history of democratic institutions. Difficulties were involved in managing the contributors. Bryce noted in pencil on Rutson's letter,<sup>2</sup>

I hope Green will not fail us. Newman will take Land Laws and Pauperism - if materials provided and lawyer will criticise.

Green was notoriously lazy.<sup>3</sup> Rutson replaced him on 'Bribery' by Thorold Rogers,<sup>4</sup> and seems to have given him 'Opportunities and Shortcomings of Government in England'.<sup>5</sup> To no avail. He eventually had to write it himself. Newman's position highlighted another problem: lack of expert knowledge on the part of the academics. This was partly solved by bringing in an expert to help out. Goschen did this for his secretary Bernard Cracroft's essay on 'The Analysis of the House of Commons', E.A. Freeman helped with Bryce's contribution, and Godfrey Lushington, starting out as an adviser to Thomas Hughes on 'Workmen and Trade Unions', ultimately took the essay over.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Macmillan MSS: Bryce - A. Macmillan, December 4 and 6, 1867, and Harrison MSS: Harrison - E.S. Beesly, n.d. (1859).
  2. Bryce MSS: Rutson - Bryce, December 10 and 11, 1866.
  3. Bryce, Studies in Contemporary Biography, p.88.
  4. Houghton MSS: Rutson - Houghton, January 17, 1867.
  5. Deduced from comparison of list of contributors in the Saturday Review, February 11, 1867, with published book.
  6. Houghton MSS: Rutson - Houghton, January 15, 1867; Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, January 2, 1867.

The best descriptions of the work in progress are contained in the two letters Rutson wrote to interest Houghton in the scheme. The first, sent to Houghton via Lord de Grey (who was not himself greatly sympathetic to the cause of reform),<sup>1</sup> sketched briefly the aim and general arrangement of the volume,<sup>2</sup>

Our idea is that the essays or papers should be as short as is compatible with bringing out clearly the points and arguments that have to be insisted on. The chapters in de Tocqueville's Democracy (to take a high standard) illustrate the sort of treatment we should like Parliamentary Reform to receive in these papers.

Rutson went on to say that Goldwin Smith would contribute a preface to the volume, not specifying any particular measures of franchise and redistribution (Lowe's intransigence had given the academics this valuable freedom of maneouvre) but referring to the Reform Bills of Liberal governments since 1852 'as indicating the policy the essays are intended to support.'

Rutson went on to specify the contributors whom Lord Houghton might possibly know - as well as Goldwin Smith, Charles Pearson 'who wrote a very good book you may have seen on the Early Ages of English History' and Thomas Hughes - but pointed out that few of the others would be known to him.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Lucien Wolf, The Life of Lord Ripon, vol.i p.221.

2. Houghton MSS: Rutson - de Grey, January 4, 1867.

3. Houghton MSS: Rutson - de Grey, January 4, 1867.

(This must, therefore, have been before Houghton's membership of the Century Club.)<sup>1</sup> He proceeded to suggest subjects which might interest Houghton. Because the preliminary plan of the essays has not survived, and he referred to the subjects by their letters and numbers in the plan, it is difficult to identify them. There were four groups, lettered A, B, C and D, and internally identified by numbers. From the references given in Rutson's letters, I have tried to reconstruct these, but this simply appears to show that the groups were purely arbitrary. However, if the ultimate form is anything to go by, five main groupings do appear among the essays, which can be taken as expressing the main purposes of the project.

When the Essays came out in March, 1867, the reviewer in the Daily News (who, I assume, knew about the project, as the assistant editor, Frank Harrison Hill, and one of the leader-writers, John Boyd Kinnear, were involved)<sup>2</sup> gave the volume a fourfold purpose: firstly, to examine the theoretical basis on which the franchise rested, secondly, to examine its working in contemporary Britain, thirdly, to compare the British situation with that of other nations, both at the present time and in history, and finally to estimate the effect in general terms of reform on the machinery of government. The first three essays fell into the first category, the next three into the second, the next three into the third, and the two last into the fourth.<sup>3</sup> Since, at the time

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1. Frederic Harrison, 'The Century Club', p.375.

2. For biographical information on Hill and Kinnear see, respectively, the D.N.B. Supp. 2, vol.ii, p.262, and Who was Who, 1916-1928, p.589.

3. Daily News, March 18, 1867.

Rutson wrote to Houghton, the project was only envisaged as occupying a single volume, a fifth category, embraced the essays later included in Questions for a Reformed Parliament, which amounted more or less to just that.

With his second letter Rutson appended not only a revised list but notes on the contributors. Both have been lost, but from his references to them in the letter it's evident that practically all the essays included in Questions for a Reformed Parliament had been allocated. There were subsequently to be a few changes. In February Hughes and Green, as we have noted, dropped out, as did Bowen, who was supposed to write on Foreign Policy. After an argument with Rutson in early March, Trevelyan withdrew his contribution.<sup>1</sup> Frederic Harrison replaced Bowen, and Charles Stuart Parker Trevelyan.

The interesting thing about Rutson's letter to Houghton is that he gives most information about what became the second volume to be published. He had given details, by January 17, of only seven out of the twelve contributors to what was to become the first. This indicates to me that the pattern of publication was changed, probably early in February, from one volume mainly dealing with questions for the reformed parliament, to two, the first dealing at greater length with more directly constitutional issues.

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1. Bryce MSS: Rutson - Bryce, March 5, 1867.

I would judge this to be the result of two pressures. The first was caused by external challenges, by the promise of reform in the Queen's speech and by the imminent appearance of Robert Lowe's Speeches and Letters on Reform, published about February 10. The second stemmed from the expansion of the project: more space meant that more essays could be included. Those of A.V. Dicey and Leslie Stephen seem to have been contributed at this time. As Dicey wrote to Bryce in 1909 that he did not meet Goldwin Smith until 1870, his essay cannot have been one of the initial ones;<sup>1</sup> and in his second letter to Houghton Rutson was still asking for advice on who could tackle an essay 'for the purpose of combating the view that prevails, that intelligence and all good influence are to be obscured and made powerless by numbers'<sup>2</sup> - which is in substance the same as the question Stephen dealt with in this essay 'On the choice of representatives by popular constituencies'.

The result of the change of plan in early February was the division of the project into two volumes, and the delay of the publication of the second, dealing with institutional reform, while the publication of the first was advanced from the end to the middle of March.<sup>3</sup> Essays on Reform was published on March 9 ; Questions for a Reformed Parliament did not follow until April 27.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Bryce MSS: Dicey - Bryce, July 25, 1909.

2. Houghton MSS: Rutson - Houghton, January 15, 1867.

3. Houghton MSS: Rutson - Houghton, January 16, 1867.

4. See files of Saturday Review, February 23 to April 27, 1867.

To have produced an original work of six hundred pages in under five months would be remarkable by today's standards. Certainly no work of similar scale was attempted at the time. Lowe's was simply a republication of speeches delivered at least six months before; Bagehot's English Constitution had been serialised in the Fortnightly through 1865 and 1866. That this was possible was surely due as much to the close links which existed between the contributors as to the abilities of Rutson as editor or Macmillan as publisher.

I have presented the links between the contributors diagrammatically in Appendix 8. You will notice firstly that fifteen out of the twenty-two attended the older universities, eleven going to Oxford, four to Cambridge. Of the fifteen eleven belonged to three or more of the five groups given on the diagram. The sort of relationships these represent will be evident from preceding chapters. It's apparent that relationships with the 'non-academic' contributors do not fall into the same pattern, nevertheless they, too, were close.

The background of the professional journalists was certainly distinct from that of the academics, but it had an identity and cohesion of its own. It essentially represented the intelligentsia of nonconformity, university-educated but, without fellowships, forced to settle for remunerative work at an earlier age. Hutton and Hill had studied at London University - where both took first class honours degrees - and under James Martineau at the Unitarian

Manchester New College. According to the D.N.B., Hill owed his introduction to journalism to Hutton, and, from being editor of the Northern Whig at Belfast, became in 1865 assistant editor of the Daily News. Kinnear, who had been political secretary to the Lord Advocate in Edinburgh, 1852-1856, had been since 1860 a leader-writer on the same paper. Hutton had been, with Townsend, joint editor and proprietor of the Spectator from 1861; George Hooper was their military correspondent.<sup>1</sup>

The links between the journalists and the university men were many. A.V. Dicey and his brother, Edward, had contributed to the Spectator since 1861.<sup>2</sup> C.H. Pearson had been co-editor with Hutton and Bagehot of the Unitarian National Review as well as a regular contributor to the Spectator.<sup>3</sup> Goldwin Smith had contributed his letters on 'The Empire' to the Daily News in 1862 and 1863,<sup>4</sup> and Frederic Harrison his letters on 'Martial Law' (anent the Eyre case) in 1866.<sup>5</sup> Leslie Stephen and John Boyd Kinnear both wrote for the Pall Mall Gazette.<sup>6</sup> The critical factor here was probably the alignment on the American Civil War:

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1. For biographical information on Hutton and Townsend, see, respectively, the D.N.B. Supp 1, p.891, Supp.2, vol.iii, p.531. For Hooper see Boase, M.E.B., vol.i, p.1527.
  2. For A.V. Dicey and Edward Dicey see, respectively, the D.N.B. (1922-30), p.259, and Supp.2, vol.i, p.479.
  3. Stebbing, Charles Henry Pearson, p.94.
  4. For Smith see the D.N.B., Supp.2, vol.iii, p.331.
  5. Frederic Harrison, op.cit., (Jamaica Papers, vol.v).
  6. Kinnear, vide supra.  
For Stephen see the D.N.B., Supp.2, vol.iii, p.401.



the supporters of the North could depend on so few public prints that relations with their editors and journalists were necessarily close, relations which were reinforced by the Jamaica campaign and the Tests agitation.

## VII

Essays on Reform, priced at 10s. 6d., was published on Saturday, March 9, 1867. Ten days later Disraeli introduced his second reform bill of the session. His first - nicknamed the 'Ten Minute' bill - had been brought in on February 25. With Cranborne and the ultras in the cabinet opposing a 'broad' measure, it was moderate in intention - promising a six pound franchise in the boroughs and a twenty pound franchise in the counties, subject to all manner of 'fancy franchises' aimed at preserving a 'balance of classes' in the reformed house. The Liberals scorned it. Its rejection took almost as little time as its drafting, and it was withdrawn the following day.<sup>1</sup> The second, retaining 'fancy franchises', promised the vote to householders in towns personally paying rates (the qualification was an important one), and householders in the counties rated at fifteen pounds a year. The house commenced a battle which was to last over

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1. I have taken the account of events and descriptions of measures in this section from F.B. Smith, The Making of the Second Reform Bill (1966), Maurice Cowling, Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution (1967), Asa Briggs, Victorian People (1954) and Royden Harrison, 'Revolution in Relation to Reform, 1865-67' in Before the Socialists (1965). It is not within the scope of this inquiry for me to deal directly with the controversies surrounding the historical interpretations of this period; however, where I have, I have made reference to the above works.

four months, and produce ultimately a measure more extensive than most of the academics had imagined, or possibly indeed wished. Circumstances had therefore favoured the essayists in enabling them to intervene at a propitious time for political discussion.

But what sort of impact did the essays actually have on the situation? From various letters written after publication, the academics appear to have been reasonably satisfied with their reception. But were they influential, in the sense implied by Asa Briggs in his reference to them in Victorian People?<sup>1</sup> Briggs seems to believe that they contributed to the direction the debate on reform took. In this section I want to argue that, in this sense, the essays were not influential at all. Now, it can be contended that the aim of the essays was not simply to contribute to the political process of reform, but, in Rutson's words,<sup>2</sup>

to meet the objections to reform and the alarm about reform that are current among educated men.

In this I think the project was significant, but I believe that it succeeded as much by inducing the organs of 'educated' opinion to regard the younger academics as a self-contained group with an influential role in the politics of the future as by the nature of the political ideas it put forward.

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1. Asa Briggs, Victorian People, p.261. (Though my faith in Briggs' judgement is somewhat vitiated by his giving the date of publication twice as 1866, before the publication of Lowe's Speeches and Letters on Reform, with which he compares them.)

2. Houghton MSS: Rutson - de Grey, January 4, 1867.

In trying to assess the impact of Essays on Reform on the political process, I think it's necessary to take the process on its own terms. So I want to begin by asking whether the parliamentary debates on reform were to any extent influenced by the Essays, then I will turn to the political ideas enunciated in the extra-parliamentary agitation.

'Generally, the debates upon the passing of an Act contain much valuable information as to what may be expected of it.' wrote Walter Bagehot in 1872,<sup>1</sup>

But the debates on the Reform Act of 1867 hardly tell anything. They are taken up with technicalities as to the ratepayers and the compound householder. Nobody in the country knew what was being done.

Having looked through Hansard and contemporary newspapers, I can only agree with this. Discussions of a theoretical nature on the subject of the relations between social and political change were rarely heard during the reform debates - virtually, in fact, were heard only when Lowe spoke. Arguments from American or continental precedent too were rare, and tended to be produced by Tory members who demonstrated that they had not set sight on the refutations of Bryce and Goldwin Smith.<sup>2</sup> Statistics about bribery, and members' interests, and the imbalance of

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1. Bagehot, 'Introduction to the Second Edition' (1872) of The English Constitution, p.266.
  2. For instance, see the speech by Charles Newdegate, Tory M.P. for North Warwickshire, on July 5, 1867. Hansard 3rd Series, vol.clxxxviii, col.1088.

constituencies, were brandished in the manner of Thorold Rogers, Cracroft and Boyd Kinnear, but such arguments had always come naturally to members with access to blue-books, newspapers and Dod, who were not likely to heed outsiders' contributions.

Probably the only sustained debate in the course of the bill's progress which raised issues of a nature akin to those dealt with in the reform essays was that of July 5, 1867, in which a clause moved by Lowe was discussed. The clause was intended to secure the interests of minorities, and ran:

At any contested election for a County represented by more than two Members, and having more than one seat vacant, every voter shall be entitled to a number of votes equal to the number of vacant seats, and may give all such votes to one candidate, or may distribute them among the candidates as he thinks fit.

Several members associated with the academics spoke in the debate: Fawcett and Walter Morrison for the clause, Mill giving an encomium of Hare's scheme. Even then, however, the Liberal contribution tended to divide on whether minorities - religious, racial or educated - were adequately catered for under the existing system, and Conservatives, like Newdegate, Cranborne and Michael Hicks-Beach occupied the area of debate the academics had covered in the essays, their arguments, of course, coming to entirely different conclusions. In the final division there was no unanimity among the university men in parliament: Fawcett, Morrison and Hughes were among Lowe's supporters, while Goschen and Trevelyan were among

the majority which rejected the clause. And probably typical of the attitude of parliamentary radicals to the whole debate about minority rights was John Bright's comment:<sup>1</sup>

I thought it exactly that sort of subject that one would hear discussed at University College Debating Society, or which would probably be discussed in the debating clubs of Oxford and Cambridge, but which has not sufficient claim to be discussed in parliament.

The agitation outside parliament can, I think, be divided into two: political campaigning and press publicity. Both interlinked, because the major London and provincial dailies carried detailed - frequently verbatim - reports of speeches at meetings, demonstrations and dinners. The Times and the Daily News also carried verbatim reports of parliamentary debates. Much of this material, and selections from editorial matter, was also reprinted in the weekly press. By and large, a study of the press should indicate whether the arguments of the reform essays were relayed by editorial or review, or were incorporated in speeches delivered in the country.

At the British Museum Newspaper Library, Colindale, I have had access to the files of London and provincial dailies and weeklies of the period, but here, as with the Parliamentary debates, such research as I have done indicates that their impact was minimal. Only the Liberal Daily News, of the main London dailies, noticed Essays on Reform when it appeared. The review was enthusiastic:<sup>2</sup>

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1. For the debate see Hansard. loc.cit., cols.1086 ff.

2. Daily News, March 18, 1867.

The volume ought to be, and doubtless soon will be, in the hands of all who are interested in the subject of reform, whether friends or opponents. It is fitted powerfully to influence opinion on the special requirements of the present crisis, and on those deeper problems of government of which the questions of the hour are merely applications.

But then two members of the senior staff - Hill and Kinnear - of the newspaper were contributors. From a letter Macmillan wrote to Bryce it appears that this sort of contact was important in ensuring that a book would be reviewed. Rutson apparently hoped that Leslie Stephen, who worked for the evening Pall Mall Gazette, would bring it to that paper's notice,<sup>1</sup> but evidently he cannot have been successful, as the Pall Mall Gazette carried no review. And, despite the fact that George Brodrick was a leader-writer, the Times did not mention the essays until May 3, when it devoted a despatch from its American correspondent to a denunciation of Goldwin Smith's 'The Experience of the American Commonwealth'.<sup>2</sup>

I have looked through the files of three other London papers, the 'independent liberal' Daily Telegraph and the Tory Morning Standard and Morning Post, without encountering any reference to the essays. As far as provincial dailies are concerned, I looked at the files of the Birmingham Post, Manchester Guardian and Edinburgh Scotsman and, drawing a total blank, left it at that. Provincial papers seem, at the time, to have been dependent on the London dailies for

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1. Bryce MSS: Alexander Macmillan - Bryce, March 14, 1867.

2. The Times, May 3, 1867.

reviews, which they reprinted, so the possibility of the essays being independently reviewed outside London seems slight. The essays were favourably reviewed in the Manchester Examiner (a periodical not on file in Colindale) on March 23,<sup>1</sup> but this seems to have been an exception, arising out of Bryce and Goldwin Smith's close connection with the paper.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the weeks after publication, reports of the reform debates took up a disproportionate amount of space which must have excluded features on other topics. Much the same can be said for the provincial press: a study of papers in Hull, Plymouth, Glasgow and Norwich produced no mention and even the Liberal Oxford Chronicle, while sympathetic to reform and regularly featuring the doings of reform-minded academics, carries no reference to the essays.

Neither did the essays apparently have any impact on the working class press. Of course they were not intended anyway for a working class audience - the price and the frequency of classical (and untranslated) quotations are proof enough of that - but the possibility that their arguments might be mediated through working-class papers had to be explored. I have been through the relevant numbers of the Sunday Reynolds' Newspaper and the weekly Bee-hive - which, after all, had Frederic Harrison and his Positivist

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1. See advertisement in the Saturday Review, March 24, 1867.
  2. Macmillan MSS: Bryce - Macmillan, March 13, 1867; the Manchester Examiner printed, in 1866 and 1867, regular articles and letters by Goldwin Smith on current controversies.



allies as contributors<sup>1</sup> - but to no avail. The working class had made its mind up on reform, and descriptions of the parliamentary debates and the external campaigns were obviously more relevant to it and its leadership than theoretical discussion.

As for public speeches these can be divided into two types: addresses by parliamentary politicians and by reform agitators. There were relatively few speeches by politicians of the first rank. Gladstone, for example, made only two public speeches - one in Paris - between January and June, 1867.<sup>2</sup> Bright, true, was out on the stump regularly, and to considerable effect, but, as Professor Vincent has pointed out, his political programme was an extemporisation on themes thrown up by events inside and outside parliament, not a logical strategy to which the ideas of the academics could contribute.<sup>3</sup> And the current parliamentary situation gave other M.P.s ample scope for variation without having to enter on any discussion of political theory, when they chose to declare their position in public.

Apart from parliamentarians, there were the two main agitational bodies, the Reform Union and the Reform League. From reports of its meetings in the press, the Reform Union seems to have been content to draw on local speakers. Although Henry Yates Thompson was associated with it, and

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1. Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, p.266.

2. A Tilney Bassett, Gladstone's Speeches (1916), pp.36-7.

3. John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, pp. 190-194.

spoke at a demonstration organised by it to protest against the Tory bill on April 17, 1867, neither he, nor any of the other speakers, show any evidence of having been influenced by the reform essays.<sup>1</sup> The same can be said for the working-class directed, London-based Reform League. It held regular meetings and demonstrations in London and the provinces, as well as the meetings of its branches; these were addressed by paid lecturers as well as the leaders of the League.<sup>2</sup> I have looked through the proceedings of several meetings, without encountering any speeches which look as if they were influenced by the reform essays.

Typical enough of these were the speeches delivered in Hyde Park during the great demonstration of May 6, 1867. The demonstration had originally been banned by the government, in view of the events of the previous year, and the withdrawal of the ban was seen as a major victory for the reform agitators. The speeches of the chairman of the Reform League, Edmond Beales, and the vice-chairman, Colonel Dickson, dealt solely with the failure of the ban on the meeting and the inadequacies of the Tory bill before parliament. That of Charles Bradlaugh had more theoretical pretensions, but even then it confined itself to stating the power of the organised working class, attacking the whigs, and then going into a long historical disquisition on the growth of reform sentiment since the reign of Elizabeth, in a style more hagiographical -

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1. Daily News, April 19, 1867.

2. F.M. Leventhal, Respectable Radical, p.80.

or denunciatory - than analytical in the manner of Bryce and Freeman.<sup>1</sup> We must remember that, for the regular stump-orator of the day, one stock speech, suitably modified in points of local or topical detail, usually sufficed. He was unlikely to use it as a vehicle for a discussion of political theory.

My purpose in going in some detail into the absence of impact of the reform essays is to suggest that, even when they were most determined to intervene politically, the academics had not as a group worked out a means of connecting with working-class politics. It can be argued that the reform essays were not, in the first instance, intended to reach the working class, but to convert 'educated men' to the cause of reform. However, working men would constitute the new electorate, and the failure of their arguments to penetrate the mainstream of political discussion during the reform crisis was not a good omen for the future. The 'failure to connect' was to dog their subsequent interventions in democratic politics.

What I am driving at is, I think, borne out by studying the one academic who succeeded in getting across to a popular audience. This was Thorold Rogers. Now his academic colleagues appear to have found Rogers somewhat coarse-grained and vulgar,<sup>2</sup>

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1. The Bee-hive, May 13, 1867.

2. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, December 24, 1886.

but from the proceedings of the Oxford Reform League I get the impression of a man who could talk the language of, and gain the trust of, working men.<sup>1</sup> Rogers was a moderate by Reform League standards,<sup>2</sup> yet he seems always to have had the confidence of the Oxford League, who wanted to put him up for parliament,<sup>3</sup> despite his being in orders. His speeches, with broad humour, homely metaphors, tussles with hecklers, questions to the audience, convey a sense of political involvement which transcends their political content. Goldwin Smith was the more notorious radical, yet in fact Smith was the more moderate in his proposals.<sup>4</sup> Smith's style of speaking was formal and his arguments logical. He could make contact with his audience, but only in a logical manner, usually by elaborating some part of his speech to a point where it became as 'extreme' as their own tap-room political discussions. And this was the sort of thing that tended to stick. A plumber member of the Reform League might refer to Disraeli as a 'two-faced Jew' but it sounds more impolitic coming from a professor. In this way I feel that the academics tended to run the risk of isolating themselves in politics, isolating themselves from their own class on charges of extremism, yet also being unable to establish any real rapport with a working-class audience. It was to be made explicit in their public activity during and after 1868.

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1. Proceedings of Oxford Reform League reported in Oxford Chronicle, April 7, 1866 - August 10, 1867.
  2. Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, p.141.
  3. Oxford Chronicle, May 18, 1867.
  4. Goldwin Smith, 'Securities for Reform' in Manchester Examiner, April 1, 1867.

Could the essays, then, be said to have been at all successful? I believe that they were, in that they established the identity of the university liberal group in the minds of the 'educated classes'. The passing of the reform bill combined with their emergence to push aside the old 'psuedo-liberal' oracles of the quality press and the reviews, and the reform essays - an optimistic political manifesto issued by a recognisable grouping of energetic younger men - set a seal on their new position. Robert Lowe concluded his review of the two volumes in the Quarterly:<sup>1</sup>

...we owe some respect to the writers who have endeavoured to put into a permanent form the principles of the new order of things, and we take leave of them with the frank admission that though we cannot accept them for our teachers, they are undoubtedly our masters.

At the other extreme of the Liberal party, John Morley in the Fortnightly rejoiced:<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to study a volume like the one under notice, with knowledge of the kind of men who have written it and of all they represent, without seeing that though the obstructionists in Church and State may have their little day, we others have the future.

This is, I think, borne out by the nature of the reviews the essays received in the quality periodical press. They were widely and, on the whole favourably reviewed.

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1. Robert Lowe (anonymously), review in The Quarterly Review, vol.cxxiii (July 1867), p.277.
  2. John Morley, review in The Fortnightly Review, vol.i (new series), (April 1, 1867), p.469.

Appendix 9 shows the pattern of reviewing. The weeklies, naturally, came first. The Saturday Review, the Spectator, and the Guardian were favourable, the Athenaeum hostile. Now the fact that the Spectator was favourable is not surprising, since both of its editors - Hutton and Townsend, and three regular contributors - Hooper, Pearson and Dicey - were involved in the project, but the Guardian was traditionally high-church and the Saturday had hitherto been the sworn enemy of reform. In both cases, it is true, the personality of the reviewer probably counted; I haven't been able to establish who the Guardian reviewer was, but Freeman was, as a high-churchman, well in with the paper<sup>1</sup> and may have had a hand in getting the book favourably reviewed (though he didn't review it himself).<sup>2</sup> He was certainly responsible for introducing to the Saturday J.R. Green, then a clergyman in the East End, and Essays on Reform was one of Green's first review assignments.<sup>3</sup>

Now, on previous form, denunciations might have been expected from both periodicals. Instead the reviewing was sympathetic, general approval was given to the aim of the scheme, and in both reviews particular attention was paid to the role of academics in the evolving political situation.

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1. W.R.W. Stephens, The Life of Edward Augustus Freeman, vol.i, p.257.

2. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, April 4, 1867.

3. Leslie Stephen, The Letters of John Richard Green (1901), p.500.

Although the Guardian reviewer expressed misgivings about the speed at which the reform fence was being taken, he concluded,<sup>1</sup>

It is desirable that the movement, of which perhaps we now see only the beginning, should be essentially an intelligent movement, that it should not be carried on exclusively, or almost exclusively, by the possessors of physical force, guided by half-educated leaders; but that there should be always at hand men at once of enlarged hearts and cultivated minds, ready to comprehend the position, and, if possible, to control it.

These sentiments were echoed more enthusiastically by J.R. Green and John Morley<sup>2</sup>. In fact the reviews the essays received from the periodical press were generally determined by the reviewers' attitude to a prior question: to what extent were academics fit persons to involve themselves in politics?

The hostile reviews - in the Athenaeum, the Contemporary, and the Quarterly - were prefaced with attacks on the notion that a university education could possibly contribute anything to the study of politics. 'Ex-M.P.', the Contemporary reviewer, wrote scornfully,<sup>3</sup>

When we read this volume, its abstractions, predictions, demonstrations and conclusions, it seems to us that we pass from the facts of history and life to the cloudy land of dreams... If these writers - eight of whom, out of twelve, are Fellows of Oxford or Cambridge - fairly

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1. The Guardian, April 3, 1867.

2. See my 'Introduction', p.2.

3. The Contemporary Review, 'The Republicanism of Young England', vol.v, (June 1867), p.238.



represent the intellectual tone of the coming agitation, and are soon to form our statesmen, we confess that we shall look with even increased anxiety to the coming destiny of the English government.

But this line of attack could be countered in a debating-society manner which was brisk enough to deal with Lowe, which probably accounts for the fact that he made relatively little of it. Obviously, if one has been arguing that reform will mean the extinction of intellect in politics, the fact that the cream of the universities happens to believe in it will be rather difficult to explain away. Lowe, however, did his best:<sup>1</sup>

The writers seem almost all to have received a good classical education; none of them display any considerable knowledge of English history or constitutional principles; all are fervent advocates of democratic change, and none, so far as we are able to gather, possess any practical experience of the manner in which public business is carried on, or any very clear views as to the limits of legislation or of the action of government.

Somewhere in that indictment there might have been an arguable case, but Lowe, tired and embittered, was not the man to conduct it. Most of the review is ill-tempered abuse:<sup>2</sup>

We are in good health, let us take poison; we have knowledge, let us subordinate it to ignorance; we have peace, let us seek for war; we have directed our affairs on the basis of individual liberty, let us change it for a deference for authority, organisation, and such words of evil omen; we have prospered under the principles of Adam Smith, let us, for a little variety, try Owen and Saint-Simon...

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1. Lowe, op.cit., p.244.

2. Lowe, op.cit., p.253.

Since the essayists' approach had been to examine these risks with open eyes, this sort of outburst was mere petulance and did not seriously challenge their position. Reservations about the role of the academics in politics, and the perceptions they derived from it, were effectively if obliquely stated in the generally sympathetic review of J.R. Green.

In a passage alluded to earlier,<sup>1</sup> Green began by demonstrating the value of the academic in British politics. He then went on to equate the position of the academic with that of those who sought the vote for themselves:<sup>2</sup>

(the essays) set before us with remarkable force...the strength of a demand for reform which knits together two classes at first sight so unlike, and yet between which there is so much similarity, as the artisan and the intellectual classes, and which springs out of the alienation of both from the present state of English politics.

But Green then argued that while there were strengths in this combination - sufficient to overcome false political interpretations and to initiate specific reforms - there were also weaknesses implicit in a combination which arose more out of a common sense of alienation than out of an interpenetration of ideas. Did the process whereby the academics became radicals also produce a comprehension of the realities of British political life? Were they

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1. In my 'Introduction', p.2.

2. Saturday Review, vol.xxiii, p.437 (April 6, 1867).

familiar enough with working class life? In particular, did they realise that the complexity and divisions within the working class - notably the distinction between what we now call the 'labour aristocracy' and the unskilled and semi-skilled - could contain a potential menace to the health of democratic institutions, instead of, as the academics argued, diminishing working-class consciousness?

As some of the more perceptive hostile reviewers pointed out, the concrete proposals of the academics depended for their radicalism on the fact that their intellectual opponents - like Lowe - were themselves extremists. There was, after all, a significant difference between 'the Reform Bills of Liberal Governments since 1852...as indicating the policy the essays are intended to support',<sup>1</sup> and the measure which had emerged by the late spring of 1867.<sup>2</sup> But in general it could be said that the decision on whether academics were fit people to conduct a political debate determined the tone of the rest of the review. If the reviewer approved, he was thereafter generally sympathetic, if he did not, he tended to ridicule.

Despite this, there was some variation in the notice taken of different essays. Brodrick's was well received, even by his adversary Lowe, and he was generally acknowledged to have acquitted himself well in the main gladiat-

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1. Houghton MSS: Rutson - de Gray, January 4, 1867.

2. For instance, see the review in the Westminster Review, vol.lxxxviii, No.173 (July 1867), p.162.

oral contest (7:0).<sup>1</sup> The essays of Dicey (4:1) and Stephen (5:1), on matters linked with the main contest, were thought more radical, and tended to find favour with the more sympathetic reviewers. The names of Hutton (3:3) and Smith (2:5) tended to provoke predictable reactions - the Times and the Economist concentrated all their criticism on Smith's essay - while Cracroft, in Mr. Beales' words 'the father of psephology',<sup>2</sup> came in for a lot of criticism (2:5). The Athenaeum reviewer discovered that he had based much of his work on aristocratic influence in the boroughs on a fifteen-year old copy of Dod, and tore much of his case to shreds.<sup>3</sup> Cracroft replied, not very convincingly, in the Daily News,<sup>4</sup> and subsequent reviewers, friendly as well as hostile to the essays in general, found little good to say for his essay. Houghton, Kinnear, Pearson, Bryce, Rutson and Young, got reasonably respectable notices from the two or three reviewers who mentioned their essays.

Essays on Reform was on the whole fortunate in its reviews. Questions for a Reformed Parliament came late, and in the mounting excitement over the progress of the reform bill relatively little notice was taken of it. By this time, too, the unity of the contributors was being put under stress by the rapidity of parliament's drive towards

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1. Of the essays separately noted thirty-five were reviewed favourably, twenty unfavourably. I have given the favourable : unfavourable notices in the brackets.
  2. H.L. Beales, 'A Centenary Tribute to an Appeal for Modernisation', p.10.
  3. The Athenaeum, March 23, 1867.
  4. The Daily News, March 28, 1867.

democracy. By the end of March party discipline among the Liberals seemed seriously to have broken down. Gladstone, trying to hold the party to a ratepaying franchise in the towns of five pounds, was opposed both on the right for conceding this much, and on the left for not conceding further. His amendment to the Tory bill failed, and he virtually abdicated from the direction of the party. This loss of control alarmed some of the academics. Bryce wrote to Freeman,<sup>1</sup>

Horrible news that the Radicals want to go into Committee against Gladstone's will, and that the latter threatens to resign the leadership. Quod melius virtat.

The prospect of a breakaway from Gladstone's line also provoked Rutson to write rather agitatedly to the Daily News. He was concerned that the Commons would proceed to enact household suffrage without a major redistribution, and warned of its consequences. He imagined Disraeli addressing the Tories,<sup>2</sup>

There is no hope for the party (you may be sure he tells them) from a measure of enfranchisement that would include only the artisans. There is much hope for it from one which will include the ignorant and subservient householders of the market towns and the decaying boroughs.

Rutson was concerned that if there were an election with household suffrage but without redistribution the result would be a house pledged to retain the decayed boroughs.

1. Bryce MSS: Bryce - Freeman, April 4, 1867.

2. Daily News, April 9, 1866.

Instead, he proposed a two-stage process. First of all, a five pounds rating franchise, and nine ~~or~~ ten pounds lodger franchise, would be granted in the boroughs; then an election would be held; and the Liberal house returned would proceed to destroy or group the smaller boroughs, then confer household suffrage on the reorganised borough constituencies.<sup>1</sup>

Rutson's vehemence was greater than his perspicacity. A redistribution bill was to be introduced before the end of the session; and Disraeli had no ulterior desire to preserve the small boroughs - indeed these tended, by and large, to return more Liberal than Tory M.P.s.<sup>2</sup> But he was not alone in trying to put the brakes on. A few days earlier in Manchester Goldwin Smith had called for the raising of the voting age from twenty-one to twenty-five, the imposition of an educational test, and the replacing of the House of Lords by a nominated senate of life peers as 'securities for reform'.<sup>3</sup>

However, this disquiet was not general amongst the academics. Henry Fawcett's conservative approaches to reform in the early 1860s were succeeded by a single-minded effort to secure the widest measure possible.<sup>4</sup> Leslie Stephen, too,

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1. Ibid.

2. H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone (1959); p.39.

3. Manchester Examiner, April 5, 1867.

4. Briggs, Victorian People, p.189

put the necessity of getting a settlement before any qualms about its nature. He had developed a theory of his own - at least I cannot find it paralleled by any of the other academics - about the necessity for reform which in fact brought him closer than any of them to Mr. Beales' model of the 'moderniser'. This was that the decisive victory of Prussia over Austria in the Seven Weeks' War dramatically exposed the inadequacies of British institutions.<sup>1</sup> The Panglossian optimism of Lowe was thus destroyed, and the attention of the British governing classes turned to the necessity of institutional reform:<sup>2</sup>

The ordinary cynic of the British press turns his satire rather against established institutions than against reforms.

Reform thus became a 'previous question' to be settled, both to throw new forces behind the 'modernisation' side, and also simply to settle the matter and give parliament freedom to concentrate on positive legislation.

Stephen's was an interesting interpretation, but I can find no evidence that it was shared by the other contributors, who tended to be sympathetic to Germany on account of its culture rather than its administration.<sup>3</sup> And, although discussions of armaments and military organisation occupied many column inches in the newspapers after Koniggratz, I can find no evidence that it played an important part in the parliamentary debates.

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1. Leslie Stephen, 'The Political Situation in England', North American Review, vol. (October, 1868), p.548.

2. Ibid., p.549.

3. See Bryce MSS: Goldwin Smith - Bryce, July 22, 1866; Elie Halevy considered T.H. Green an apostle of Prussian 'efficiency' (Imperialism and the Rise of Labour (1951 ed.) p.140) but Green's notes on Germany indicate that it was the inefficient and timeless aspect of the country that attracted him (Green MSS: Essay-Books).



At least as many of the contributors were prepared to view household suffrage with equanimity. The burden of Dicey's essay, recognised as the most radical in the book, was an argument for equality of political rights;<sup>1</sup> Rogers continued to advocate full manhood suffrage,<sup>2</sup> Lushington and Harrison likewise.<sup>3</sup> And, as the bill proceeded through parliament, changes were made which made it more acceptable to the doubtful. Redistribution was brought in; and a House of Lords amendment was accepted which was supposed to ensure minority representation in three-member constituencies by giving each voter only two votes - this was said to be the result of Leonard Courtney's advocacy in the Times.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as an incidental reinforcement of the arguments for reform, in April wealthy British juries acquitted Lieutenant Brand and Colonel, now General, Nelson, having refused to indict Governor Eyre himself in March.

#### VIII

My conclusions are therefore these: the reform essays were not an intervention of experts in politics, but rather the distinctive reaction of the university liberal group to the particular manner in which the reform debate was conducted.

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1. John Morley in Fortnightly Review, p.492.

2. Oxford Chronicle, April 20, 1867.

3. For the Positivist 'line' on the suffrage, see Frederic Harrison, 'The Transit of Power', published in the Fortnightly Review, vol.iii (May, 1868), republished in Order and Progress, pp.147-61.

4. G.P. Gooch, Lord Courtney, p.84.

The academics were sympathetic to reform for two main reasons: the defence of the theory of popular government implied in their reaction to the American Civil War, and the experience the struggle for university reform had given them of the inertia of British institutions. Neither, however, implied any direct connection with popular reform movements. What really activated them to intervene was Lowe's anti-reform polemic and his influence among the 'educated classes'.

The method of response they chose - the symposium - was both suited to group production and met the academics' need to identify themselves. This was the main success of the project: it can't otherwise be said to have made a contribution to the direction the reform agitation took. Despite mixed feelings about the nature of the bill finally passed, the academics were to maintain this corporate political identity in preparing for the elections on the new franchise. 'English politics just now are in a most befuddled condition' wrote Leslie Stephen in June 1868,<sup>1</sup>

Parliament wrangles and disputes and talks nonsense and does nothing. There are no leaders and no policy and no common sense. The Reform Bill will change all this and we will shoot Niagara. I am very glad of it, for we are terribly in want of an earthquake.

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1. Maitland, Leslie Stephen, p.203.